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COLLECTION
OF
BRITISH AUTHORS

TAUCHNITZ EDITION.

VOL. 1884.

THE GREATEST HEIRESS IN ENGLAND

BY

MRS. OLIPHANT.

IN TWO VOLUMES. — VOL. I.

LEIPZIG: BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ.

PARIS: G. REINWALD & Cie, 15, RUE DES SAINTS-PÈRES.

PARIS: THE GALIGNANI LIBRARY, 224, RUE DE RIVOLI,
AND AT NICE, 16, QUAI MASSENA.

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THE SORCERESS . . . . 2 v.
SIR ROBERT'S FORTUNE . 2 v.
THE WAYS OF LIFE . . . 1 v.
OLD MR. TREDGOLD . . . 2 v.

THE GREATEST HEIRESS IN ENGLAND.

BY

MRS. OLIPHANT,
AUTHOR OF
"THE CHRONICLES OF CARLINGFORD," ETC.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LEIPZIG
BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ
1880.

"A lady richly left ....
An unlessoned girl, unschooled, unpractised:
Happy in this, she is not yet so old
But she may learn."—*Merchant of Venice.*

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OF VOLUME I.

THE GREATEST HEIRESS IN ENGLAND.

CHAPTER I.

NO. 6 IN THE TERRACE.

A COUNTRY town, quiet, simple, and dull, chiefly of old construction, but with a few new streets and scattered villas of modern flimsiness, a river flowing through it, dulled and stilled with the frost; trees visible in every direction, blocking up the horizon and making a background, though only with a confused anatomy of bare branches, to the red houses; not many people about the streets, and these cold, subdued, only brightening a little with the idea that if the frost "held" there might be skating to-morrow. On one side the High Street trended down a slight slope towards the river, on the other ran vaguely away into a delta of small streets, which in their turn led to the common, on the edge of which lay the new district of Farafield. All towns it is said have a tendency to stray and expand themselves towards the west, and this is what had happened here. The little new streets, roads, crescents, and places, all strayed towards the setting

sun. The best and biggest of these, and at the same time the furthest off of all, was the Terrace, a somewhat gloomy row of houses, facing towards the common, and commanding across the strip of garden which kept them in dignified seclusion from the road, a full view of the broken expanse of gorse and heather over which the sunsets played, affording to these monotonous windows a daily spectacle far more splendid than any official pomp. There were but twelve of these houses, ambitiously built to look like one great "Elizabethan mansion." Except one or two large, old-fashioned, substantial houses in the Market Place, these were the largest and most pretentious dwellings in the town; the proud occupants considered the pile as a very fine specimen of modern domestic architecture, and its gentility was undoubted. It was the landlord's desire that nobody who worked for his or her living should enter these sacred precincts. It is difficult to keep so noble a resolution in a country where so many occupations which are not conspicuous to the common eye, live and grow; but still it was an exalted aim.

In this town there was a street, and in this street there was a house, and in this house there was a room —After this fairy-tale fashion we may be permitted to begin this history. The house which was called No. 6 in the Terrace, was in no way remarkable externally among its neighbours; but within the constitution of the family was peculiar. The nominal master of the house was a retired clerk of the highest respectability, with his equally respectable wife. But it was well known that this excellent couple existed (in the Terrace) merely as ministers to the comfort of an old man who inhabited the better part of the house, and whose

convenience was paramount over all its other arrangements. There was a link of relationship, it was understood, between the Fords and old Mr. Trevor, and though there was no great disparity of social condition between them, yet there was the great practical difference that old Trevor was very rich, and the Fords had no more than sufficient for their homely wants—wants much more humble than those of the ordinary residents in the Terrace, who were the *élite* of the town. This gave a tone of respect to their intercourse on one side, and a kind of superiority on the other. The Fords were of the opinion that old Mr. Trevor had greatly the best of the bargain. He had none of the troubles of a house upon his shoulders, and he had all its advantages. The domestic arrangements which cost Mrs. Ford so much thought, cost him nothing but money; he had no care, no annoyance about anything, neither taxes to pay nor servants to look after; and everything went on like clockwork; his tastes were considered in every way, and all things made subservient to him. When coals or meat rose in value, or when one of the three servants (each more troublesome than the other, as it is the nature of maids to be) was disagreeable, what did it matter to old Mr. Trevor? And when that question arose about the Borough rate, what had he to say to it? Nothing, absolutely nothing! all this daily burden was on the shoulders of Richard Ford and Susan his wife; whereas Mr. Trevor had nothing to do but to put his hand into his pocket, to some people the easiest exercise! He had the best of everything, the chief rooms, and the most unwearied attendance; and not only for him but for his two children, who were a still more anxious charge, as Mrs.

Ford expressed it, was every good thing provided. Sometimes the excellent couple grumbled, and sometimes felt it hard that being relations there should be so much difference; but on the whole both parties were aware that their own comforts profited by the conjunction, and the household machinery worked smoothly, with as few jars and as much harmony as is possible to man.

At the time this history begins Mr. Trevor was seated in the drawing-room, the best room in the house. The Fords occupied the front parlour below, where the furniture was moderate and homely; but all the skill of the upholsterer had been displayed above. The room had two long windows looking out over the common, not at this moment a very cheerful prospect. There was nothing outside but mist and dampness, made more dismal by incipient frost, and full of the sentiment of cold, a chill that went to your heart. The prospect inside was not much adapted to warm or cheer in such circumstances. The windows were cut down to the floor, as is usual in suburban houses, and though the draught had been shut out as much as possible by list and stamped leather, and by the large rugs of silky white fur which lay in front of each window, yet there were still little impertinent whiffs of air blowing about. And the moral effect was still more chilly. It was not an artistic room according to the fashion of the present day, or one indeed in which any taste to speak of had been shown. The walls were white with gilded ornaments, the curtains were blue, the carpet showed large bouquets of flowers upon a light ground. There were large prints, very large, and not very interesting, royal marriages and christenings

hanging, one in the centre of each wall. Thus it will be seen there was nothing to distinguish it from a hundred other unremarkable and unattractive apartments of the ordinary British kind. A large folding screen was disposed round the door to keep out the draught, and the folding doors which led into Mr. Trevor's bedroom behind, were veiled with curtains of the same blue as those of the windows. The old man was seated by a large fire in a comfortable easy-chair with a writing-table within reach of his hand. Mr. Trevor was not a man of imposing presence; he was little and very thin, wrapped in a dark coloured dressing-gown with a high collar in which he seemed pilloried, and a brown wig which imparted a very aged juvenility to his small and wrinkled face. Grey hairs harmonize and soften wrinkles; but the smooth chin and bright brown locks of this little old man gave him a somewhat elfish appearance, something like that of an elderly bird. He sat with a pen in his hand making notes upon a large document opened out upon the writing-table, and his action and a little unconscious chirp to which he gave vent now and then, increased his resemblance to an alert sparrow. And indeed it might have been a claw which Mr. Trevor was holding up with a quill in it, and his little air of triumphant success and self-content, his head held on one side, and the dab he made from time to time upon his paper gave him very much the air of a sparrow. He had laid down his "Times" which hung in a much crumpled condition, like a table-cover, over a small round table on his other hand, in order to make this sudden note whatever it might be, and as he made it he chuckled. The paper on which he wrote was large

blue paper like that employed by lawyers, and had an air of formality and importance. It was smoothed out over a big blotting-book, not long enough quite to contain it, and had a dog's-ear at the lower corner, which proved a frequent recurrence on the part of the writer to this favourite manuscript. When he had written all that occurred to him, Mr. Trevor put down his pen and resumed the "Times;" but the interest of the previous occupation carried the day even over that invaluable newspaper, which is as good as a trade to idle persons. He had not gone down a column before he paused, rested his paper on his knee, and chuckled again. Then he leant over the writing-table and read the note he had made, which was tolerably long; then with his "Times" in his hand, rose and went to the door, losing himself behind the screen. There he stood for a moment, wrapping his dressing-gown around his thin legs with a shiver, and called for "Ford! Ford!" Presently a reply came, muffled by the distance, from the room below. "I've put in another clause," the old man called over the stair.

Ford below opened the door of his parlour to listen.

"Bless me! have you indeed, Mr. Trevor?" he replied, with less enthusiasm.

"Come up, come up, and you shall hear it," said the other, fidgetting with excitement. Then he returned to his easy-chair, laughing to himself under his breath. He bent over the document and read it again. "They'll keep her straight, they'll keep her straight among them," he said to himself. "She'll be clever if she goes wrong after all this," and then he sat down

again, chuckling and tucking the "Times" like a napkin over his knees.

All this time he had not been alone; but his companion was not one who claimed much notice. There was spread before the fire a large milky white rug, like those that stopped the draught from the windows; and upon this, half buried in the fur, lay a small boy in knickerbockers, absorbed in a book. The child was between seven and eight; he was dressed in a blue velveteen suit, somewhat shabby. He was small even for his small age. His face was a little pale face, with fair and rather lanky locks. Sometimes he would lie on his back with his book supported upon his chest —sometimes the other way, with the book on the rug, and his head a little raised, leaning on his hands. This was his attitude at present; he took no notice of his father, nor his father of him; he was a kind of postscript to old Mr. Trevor's life; no one had expected him, no one had wanted him; when he chose to come into the world it was at his own risk, so to speak. He had been permitted to live, and had been called John, a good, safe, serviceable name, but no special encouragement of any other kind had been given to him, to pursue the thankless path of existence. Nevertheless, little Jock had done so in a dogged sort of way. He had been delicate, but he had always gone on all the same. Lately he had found the best of all allies and defenders in his sister, but no one else took much notice of him, nor he of them; and his father and he paid no attention to each other. Mr. Trevor took care not to stumble over him, being thoroughly accustomed to his presence; and as for little Jock, he never stirred. He was on the rug in the body, but in soul he was in

the forest of Ardennes, or tilting on the Spanish roads with Don Quixote. It was wonderful, some people thought, that such a baby should read at all, or reading that he should have any books above the level of those that are written in three syllables. But the child had no baby books, and therefore he took what he could get. Are not the baby books a snare and delusion, keeping children out of their inheritance? How can they understand Shakespeare you will say? and I suppose Jock did not understand; yet that great person pervaded the very air about this little person, so that it glowed and shone. Only his shoulders raised a little way out of the white silky fluff of the rug, betrayed the immovable creature, and his book was almost lost altogether in it. There he lay, thinking nothing of how his life was to run, or of the influences which might be developing round him. There was not a piece of furniture in the room which counted for less with Mr. Trevor than little Jock.

Ford was a long time coming; he had some business of his own in hand, which, though not half so important, was on the whole more interesting to him than Mr. Trevor's business; and then he had a little argumentation with Mrs. Ford before he could get away.

"What is it now?" Mrs. Ford said fretfully, "what does he make such a fuss about? Sure there's nothing so very wonderful in making a will. I'd say, 'I leave all I have to my two children,' and there would be an end of it. He makes as much of it as if it was a book he was writing. Many a book has been written with less fuss."

"My dear," said Ford, "there are many people who

can write books and cannot make a will; indeed the most of them have no need to, if all we hear is true. And you don't give a thought to the interests—I may say the colossal interests—that are involved."

"Pooh!" said Mrs. Ford, "I think of our own interests if you please, which are all I care for. Is he going to leave us anything? that is what I want to know."

"I am sorry you are so mercenary, my dear."

"I am not mercenary, Mr. Ford; but I like to see an inch before me, and know what is to become of me. He's failing fast, anyone can see that; and if we're left with the lease of a big house on our hands—" This was the danger that afflicted Mrs. Ford at all moments, and robbed her of her peace.

"Stuff!" Ford said. He knew a great deal about the important literary composition which the old gentleman was concocting; but "he was not at liberty" to mention what he knew. Sometimes it made him laugh secretly within himself, to think how differently she would talk if she too knew. But then that is the case in most matters. He went upstairs at last deliberately, counting (as it seemed) every step, while Mr. Trevor sat impatient in his great chair, full of the enthusiasm of his own work, and thinking every minute an hour till he could show his friend, who was entirely in his confidence, who almost seemed like his *collaborateur*, the last stroke he had made. It was the *magnum opus* of Mr. Trevor's life, the work by which he hoped to be remembered, to attain that immortality in the recollection of other men which all men desire. For a long time he had been working at it, a little bit at a time as it occurred to him. He was not like the

thriftless literary persons to whom Ford compared him, who write whether they have anything to say or not, whether the fountain is welling forth freely or has to be pumped up drop by drop. Mr. Trevor composed his great work under the most favourable conditions. He had it by him constantly, night and day, and when something occurred to him, if it were in the middle of the night, he would get up and wrap his dressing-gown round his shrunken person and put it down. He did not forget it either sleeping or waking. It was a resource for his imagination, an occupation for his life. Also it was likely to prove a considerable source of occupation to others after his death, if nobody stepped in to lick it into shape.

When he heard Ford's step on the stairs he began to chuckle again, already enjoying the surprise and admiration which he felt his last new idea must call forth. Ford was a very good literary confidant. He would find fault with a trifle now and then, which made his general approbation all the more valuable, as showing that there was discrimination in it. Mr. Trevor put away the "Times" from his knees, and drew the blotting-book with its precious contents a little nearer. He waited with as much impatience as a lover would show for the appearance of his love. And he had time to take off his spectacles, clean them carefully, rubbing them with his handkerchief, and put them on again with great deliberation before Ford, after very carefully and audibly closing the door behind him, appeared at last on the inner side of the screen which kept out the draught, that draught which rushed up the narrow ravine of the staircase as up an Alpine *couloir* white with snow.

CHAPTER II.

OLD JOHN TREVOR.

JOHN TREVOR had been a schoolmaster for the greater part of his life. How he acquired so well sounding a name nobody knew. He had no relations, he always said, in the male line, and his friends on the mother's side were people of undistinguished surnames. And for the first fifty years of his life he had maintained a very even tenor of existence, always respectable, always a man who kept his engagements, paid his way, gave his entire attention, as his circulars said, to the pupils confided to his care; but even in his schoolmastership there was nothing of a remarkable character. After passing many obscure years as an usher he attained to an academy of his own, in which a sound religious and commercial education was ensured, as the same circular informed the parents and guardians of Farafield, by the employment of most competent masters for all the branches included in the course, and by his own unremitting care. But often the masters at Mr. Trevor's academy were represented solely by himself, and the number of his pupils never embarrassed or overweighted him. The good man, however, worked his way all the same; he kept afloat, which so many find it impossible to do. If the number of scholars diminished he lived harder, when it increased he laid by a little. He was never extravagant, never forgot that his occupation was a precarious one, and thus—turning out a few creditable arithmeticians to fill up the places in the little "offices" of Farafield, the solicitor's, the auctioneer's, the big builder's, and

even in the better shops, where they were the best of cashiers, never wrong in a total—he lived on from year to year. His house was but a dingy one, with a large room for his pupils, and two upstairs, shabby enough, in which he lived; but, by dint of sheer continuance and respectability, John Trevor, by the time he was fifty, was as much respected in Farafield as a man leading such a virtuous, colourless, joyless, unblamable existence has a right to be.

But at fifty a curious circumstance happened. John Trevor married. To say that he fell in love would perhaps scarcely represent the case. He had a friend who had been in India and all over the world, and who came home to Farafield with a liver-complaint, and a great deal of money, some people said. Trevor at first did not believe very much in the money. "I have enough to live upon," his friend said; and what more was necessary? No one knew very well how the money had been made—though that it was honestly acquired there was no doubt. He had been a clerk in an office in Farafield first, then because of his good conduct, which everybody had full faith in, and his business qualities (at which everybody laughed), he was sent to London by his employer, and received into an office there, from which he was sent to India, coming home with this fortune, but with worn-out health, to his native place. "Fortune? you can call it a fortune if you like. It is enough to live on," John Trevor repeated, "that is all I know about it. To be sure that *is* a fortune, for to have enough for your old days, and not to be compelled to work, what could a man desire more? But poor Rainy will not enjoy it long," his old schoolfellow added regretfully. Rainy

was older by five or six years than John Trevor; but fifty-six does not seem old when one is drawing near that age, though it is a respectable antiquity to youth. Rainy's sister had been a hard-working woman too; she had been a governess, and then had kept a school; then looked after the children of a widowed brother; and during her whole life had discharged the duties of the supernumerary woman in a large family, taking care of everybody who wanted taking care of. When her brother returned to Farafield she had come to him to be his companion and nurse. He gave her a very nice home, everybody said, with much admiration of the brother's kindness and the sister's good luck. They lived in Swallow Street, in one of the old houses, which were warmer and better built than the new ones, and kept two maids, and had everything comfortable, if not handsome, about them. When poor Rainy died, Miss Rainy had a great deal of business to do which she did not at all understand. She had to refer to John Trevor perpetually in the first week or two, and she was not young any longer, nor ambitious, the good soul, and nobody had been so kind to her brother as John, and they had known each other all their lives. It came about thus quite naturally that they married. To be sure there were a great many people who said that Trevor married Miss Rainy for her money, as if poor old John at fifty had been able to have his choice of all the lovely young maidens of the district. But this was not the case; neither was it for love they married. They married for mutual support and company, not a bad motive after all. If there had been no money in the case, they would have contented themselves in their loneliness; but as she had a

house and an independence, and he an occupation, they "felt justified," he said to all inquirers, in taking a step which otherwise they might not have contemplated. The consequences however were not at all such as they contemplated. Mrs. Trevor began, too late, with the energy of a workman who has no time to lose, the hard trade of a mother. She had one baby after another at headlong speed, losing them almost as soon as they were born, and losing her own health and tranquillity in the process. For some half dozen years the poor soul was either ill or in mourning. And at the end of that period she died. Poor Trevor saved his little Lucy out of the wreck, that was all; there were five or six little mounds in the churchyard beside Mrs. Trevor's longer one, and so her kind old-maidenly existence was over; for before she married she had been universally acknowledged, even by her closest friends, to be an old maid.

It was not till Mrs. Trevor was dead that it became fully known in Farafield that it was no humble competency that had been left to her by her brother, but "an immense fortune." Neither she nor her husband had known it till long after their marriage. Rainy had been a very clever business-man, though his townsfolk all laughed at the idea, and some of his speculations which had been all but forgotten, turned out at last to be real mines of gold. When it was known what a large, what a fabulous fortune it was, all Rainy's kindred and connections were roused as one man. They crowded round Trevor, most of them demanding their share, almost all of them fully believing that he had known from the beginning how matters stood, and had married (being so much in request, poor old John!)

solely on this inducement; but some of them on the other hand, showed their admiration by leaving their own little bits of fortune to Lucy, already so liberally endowed. Both of these effects were natural enough. Trevor held his own bravely against them all. Rainy had left his money to his sister; he knew best who deserved it; and it was not for him (Trevor) to annul or allow to be annulled his brother-in-law's wishes, especially now that Lucilla Rainy (poor thing!) had a child to inherit all that belonged to her. He was not illiberal, however, though he was unyielding on the point of law and his child's rights, and between him and the town-clerk, who was a person of great influence and much trusted in by the surrounding population, the crowd of discontented relations were silenced. As for the others, those who insisted upon leaving their money to Lucy on the old and always popular principle, that to those that have shall be given, Trevor allowed them to do what seemed to them good; and by this treatment it came to pass that the fortune of Lucy acquired several additions. "Money draws money," the proverb says. Thus this man of fifty-six, with all the restrained and economical habits of a life-time passed in laborious endeavours to make the two ends meet, found himself at the latter end of his life with a great fortune and a motherless baby on his hands. The position in both ways was very strange to him. He gave up the school, generously bestowing the good-will, the furniture, and the remaining pupils on young Philip Rainy, the son of a cousin of his wife. He would not give away his child's money; but he hoped, he said, that he would always be ready to serve an old friend with that which was his own. And then he

gave himself up to the charge of Lucy's fortune. One thing that was to the credit of John Trevor, all Farafield said, was that he never gave himself any airs or committed any extravagances. He lived on the same income with which his wife and he had begun life, before the great windfalls came which made their little daughter one of the richest heiresses in England. He might have bought himself a great house, set up a carriage, tried to make his way into society. But he did none of these things. He lived on in the old way, without fuss or show, nursed Lucy's fortune and rolled it into ever-increasing bulk like a snowball, and had Lucy nursed as best he might with no woman to help him. How it was that in this respectable and right-minded career there should have occurred the interval of folly in which little Jock came into the world, who can tell? The second Mrs. Trevor was a good woman enough, and had acted for some years as his housekeeper and the superintendant of Lucy's health and comfort—a comely person too, which perhaps had something to do with it. But nobody ever dwelt upon this moment of aberration in old Trevor's life, for his second wife died as his first wife had done, and there would have been an end of the incident but for little Jock. And nobody made much account of him.

When the second Mrs. Trevor died, he gave up housekeeping. Perhaps he was afraid of other risks that might attend him in the same way. When a man is a widower for the second time it is impossible to say what Bluebeard career he may not rush into. In this as in so many other things, *il n'y a que le premier pas qui coûte.* After that there is no telling to what lengths you may go. So Trevor wisely withdrew from

all hazards. He looked about him carefully, and fixed upon Mrs. Ford, who was a cousin of his first wife. Ford was just then beginning to sigh and make comparisons between his own lot and that of his employer, who was his contemporary, and had just retired with, if not a fortune, at least a competency. "Whereas I shall have to slave on to the end," Ford said. One evening, however, his wife came out to meet him in high excitement to tell him what had happened.

"He will buy the lease for us," she said, "and set us up, and then he will take our lodgings. I never should have thought old Trevor would be so liberal; but I suppose it is for poor Lucilla's sake."

And next day they went and inspected No. 6 in the Terrace. Mr. and Mrs. Ford felt that it was a solemn moment in their career; they had no children, and they liked to be comfortable, but such a piece of grandeur as a house in the Terrace had never come within the range of their hopes; and Mrs. Ford liked the idea of the cook, and the housemaid, and the parlourmaid. Thus the bargain was made; and though the Fords had not found it quite so delightful as it appeared at first, yet the experiment was on the whole a successful one. The household got on as well as it was possible for such a composite household to do. Sometimes a maid would be saucy, and give Mrs. Ford to understand as she knew very well who was the real master; and sometimes Mr. Trevor would make himself disagreeable and find fault with the eggs, or complain of the tea. But barring these rufflings of the rose leaves, all went very well with the house. When she was not thinking of her housekeeping, Mrs. Ford kept a convenient little fund of misery on hand, which

she could draw upon at the shortest notice, as to the position in which she and her husband would be left when Mr. Trevor died. Mr. Trevor was now seventy, so that the fear was not unnatural, and she was a woman full of anxieties who liked to have one within reach. Ford was above all this; he knew that they were not to be left with the lease of the house in the Terrace and nothing more to trust to. For he had become Mr. Trevor's confidant. It is not so touching a relationship as that which exists at the theatre between the first and second ladies, the heroine in white satin and the confidant in muslin; but it is doubtful whether Tilburina ever made revelations more exciting than those over which these two old men wagged their beards—or rather their smooth old chins, well shaven every morning; for at their age and in their condition of life beards were still unknown.

Mr. Trevor was sixty-five when the idea of making his will occurred to him first. Not that he had left Lucy's fortune in any doubt up to that moment. A brief and concise little document existed in his lawyer's hands, putting her rights entirely beyond question; but it was years after the making of this first will that the idea occurred to him of shaping out Lucy's life for her, and settling the course of years after he should have himself passed from the conduct of affairs. He was a man who had lived a very matter-of-fact life; but John Trevor was not a man without imagination. Even in the days when he had least time for such vanities, there had been gleams of fancy about him, and he had always been fond of entering into the circumstances of his pupils, and giving them his advice. They all knew that to have his advice asked was a thing that pleased

him. And the management of a great fortune excites the mind and draws forth the imagination. He had to throw himself into all the combinations of speculative money-making, the romance of shares and coupons, and had acquired a sort of divination, a spirit of prophecy, a power of seeing what was about to pay or not to pay. Some men have this power by nature, but few acquire it; and no doubt it had lain dormant in John Trevor all the years during which, having no money to invest, he had not cared to exercise his faculties as to the best investment. When, however, he had made many very successful *coups*, and eluded many stumbles, and steered triumphantly through some dangers, a sense of his own cleverness and power stole into his heart. He felt that he was a man with great powers of administration, and instincts which it was a thousand pities not to make use of; and it suddenly came into his mind one evening, when he had just added several thousand pounds to Lucy's fortune by a very successful and clever operation, that he might exercise these powers in a still more effectual way. Ah! if Lucy's fortune had been a poor little trumpery bit of a fortune, not enough for the girl to live on, it would not have increased like this, it would never have doubled itself, as old Trevor's money did! Even Providence seemed in the compact, and gave the advantage to the heiress, just as the richer people of the Rainy kindred did, who gave her their money because she had so much already. But this is a digression. As Mr. Trevor thought over the whole question—and naturally Lucy's fortune, which was his chief occupation, was also the thing that took up most of his thoughts—he could not but feel a vivid regret that it would be impossible to

outlive his own ending, and see how the money throve in Lucy's hands. This seems a whimsical regret, but it is not an unnatural one. Could we only keep a share of what is going on, could we but be sure of seeing our ideas carried out, and assisting at our own dying and burying, and all that would follow after, death would be a much less dismal matter. To be sure, in most cases the penalty of this post-mortem spectatorship would be that we should not see our ideas carried out at all. But this was not what Mr. Trevor looked forward to. He would have been quite content to give up his share in the world, if he could only have kept an eye on the course of events afterwards, and retained some power of suggesting, at least, what ought to be done. But even under the most favourable view, the hereafter for which we hope, was not likely, Mr. Trevor felt, to permit any active intervention of the disembodied spirit in the matter of stock or shares. And it was a painful check to him to feel that in a few years, at the most, Lucy's property and herself would be deprived of the invaluable guidance which his own experience and intelligence could give. It was while this regret was heavy upon him that the idea of making a will suddenly occurred to him—not the ordinary sort of will, a thing which, as already indicated, was made long ago, but a potential and living instrument, by which out of his grave he would still be able to look after the affairs which had cost him so much trouble, and which had so prospered in his hands. The idea stirred him with the liveliest thrill of pleasure. He began the document the very next day, after laying in a stock of paper, large blue folio, lined and crackling, that the very out-

ward form might be absolutely correct. And it was a very remarkable document; it was the romance, the poem of John Trevor's life. Sitting by himself among his coupons and account-books, he had evolved out of his own consciousness, bit by bit, the ideal of a millionaire—nay of a female millionaire—of an heiress, not in her usual aspect as the prey of fortune-hunters, pursued for love, not of herself, but of her money. The sentimental side of the question did not touch old Trevor at all. He thought of his daughter from a very different point of view. If he ever reflected upon a possible husband for her, it was with great impatience and distaste of the idea. He would rather, if he could, have settled for her that she should never marry. He wanted her to be herself, not anybody's wife. All his calculations were for her as she was, Lucy Trevor, not for Mrs. So-and-so. It seemed to him that the woman who would take up his sketch of existence, and carry it out, would be something much more worth thinking of than a married lady of the ordinary level. She would be a very important person indeed, in her father's sketch of her, making what he intended to be a very fine use of her money, and living for that end like a princess. He did not cut off any portion of her duties, because she was a woman; indeed he thought no more of that fact than in so far as it was this which gave him his chief certainty of being able to mould her, and make her life what he wished. He would not, probably, have thought it worth his while to take so much trouble had she been a boy; he would not have had the same faith in her, nor the same feeling about her position. It would have been more a matter of course, not so interesting to the fancy. Perhaps a girl,

in all cases, answers the purpose of an ideal better than a boy does. Old Trevor did not think much about the question of sex, but instinctively felt that the girl was what he wanted, and it would be impossible to conceive an exercise of the imagination more exciting, more interesting. It was as near like creating a human being as anything could be. Of the character of Lucy—in the flesh, a slim and quiet girl of sixteen—her father knew not very much; but the Lucy who, day by day, developed more and more in the will became a personage very distinct to him. The manner in which she was to conduct herself in all the difficulties she might meet, was the subject of his continual thoughts: until at last it seemed to the old man that he saw her as in a mirror moving along through the difficulties and perplexities of her life in which his own position would enable him to accompany her and help her with his advice—rather than that he was actually inventing the entire course of her experience for her.

This was the subject upon which Ford was Mr. Trevor's confidant. He could not have lived all alone in this imaginary world; he had to consult some one, to tell some one of all the developments of his imagination as he traced his heiress through her life. And Ford, you may be sure, liked to know every particular, and was pleased to have a hand in the guidance of so rich a person, and to help to decide how so much money was to be spent. It made him feel as if he were rich himself. He made a very judicious confidant. He agreed in all Mr. Trevor's ideas in the greater matters, and differed in trifles, just enough to show the independence of his judgment; and as it

happened, there was something particularly interesting to Ford in the chapter of Lucy's future life at which they had now arrived.

CHAPTER III.

THE WILL.

"I THINK I have got it now, Ford, I think I have got it now," the old man said, rubbing his hands. "But it has given me a great deal of trouble. Get yourself a chair, and sit down. I want you to hear how I've put it. I think, though I don't want to be conceited, that this time I have hit upon the very thing. Sit down, Ford, and give me your advice."

Ford found himself a chair, and put it in front of the fire. His feet were close to little Jock on the hearth-rug, but neither did he pay the least attention to little Jock, any more than if he had been a little dog half buried in the fur. The child moved now and then, as his position became fatiguing. He changed now an elbow, now the hand with which he held his book, and sometimes fluttered the pages as he turned them; but these little movements were like the falling of the ashes from the grate, or the little flickers of the flames, and no one took any notice. Jock kept on reading his Shakespeare, wholly absorbed in it; yet as in a dream heard them talking, and remembered afterwards, as children do, what they had said.

"Listen!" said Mr. Trevor. He was so eager to read that he had taken his MS. into his hands before his confidant was ready to hear, and waited, clearing his throat while Ford took his seat. Then without a

pause, raising his hand to command attention, he began:

"In respect to the future residence of my daughter Lucy, up to the moment of her coming of age, I desire that her time should be divided between two homes which I have selected for her. It is my wish that she should pass the first six months of every year in the house and under the care of Lady Randolph, Park Street, London——."

Here Ford interrupted with an exclamation of astonishment. "Lady Randolph!" he said.

Trevor paused, and uttered his usual chuckle, but with a still livelier note of pleasure in it. "Ah!" he said. "Lady Randolph, that surprises you, Ford. We haven't many titles among us, have we? but she's a relation of poor Lucilla's all the same; or at least she says so," he added with another chuckle. "There is nothing like money for opening people's eyes."

"A relation of Lucilla's!" Ford's amazement was not more genuine than the impression of awe made upon him by the name. "I never knew the Rainys had any rich relations. I suppose you mean Sir Thomas Randolph at the Hall, the lord of the manor, he that was Member for the county when I first came here—the present Sir Thomas's uncle—the——"

"That will do," said the old man. "It's not Sir Thomas, but it's his wife, or his widow, to be exact. She says she is a relation—no, a connection of Lucilla's—and she ought to know best. She has made me an offer to take charge of Lucy, and introduce her, as she calls it. I've been of use to my Lady Randolph in the way of business, and she wants to be of use to me. I don't ask, [illegible] part, if it's altogether disin-

terested. It appears there was a Randolph that married beneath him; I can't tell you how long ago. My Lady," said old Trevor dryly, "would not break her heart, perhaps, if another Randolph married beneath him, and into the same family too."

"But," said Ford, "that would be no reason for putting Lucy in her hands—a poor lamb in the way of the wolf."

"One wolf is not a bad thing to keep off others; besides, my good fellow, I've taken every precaution. Wait till you see," and he resumed his manuscript, with again a little preparatory clearing of his throat.

"The latter part of the year it is my wish that Lucy should spend in the house which has already been her home for some years, under the charge of her other relations, Richard Ford and Susan, his wife, who have been her fast friends since ever she can recollect, and to whom for this purpose I hereby give and bequeath the said house, No. 6 in the Terrace, in the parish of Farafield, in the hundred of——"

"Stop a bit!" said Ford feebly; he was overcome by his feelings. "'Her fast friends,'" he repeated "that's just what we are. We've loved her like our own, that's what we've always done, Susan and me. And as for Susan, many's the time she has said, 'Supposing anything was to happen, or any change to occur, what should we do without Lucy? It would be like losing a child of our own.'"

"Then you approve?" Trevor said. He liked to receive the full expression of the gratitude which was his due.

"Approve!" said Ford. When a man without any natural dignity to speak of, is moved tearfully, the

effect is sometimes less pathetic than ludicrous; the good man did all but cry. "It isn't the property, Mr. Trevor, it's the trust," he said, with a restrained sob. "But one thing I'll promise, it shan't be a trust betrayed. We'll watch over her night and day. There shall be no wolf come near her while she's with Susan and me."

"In moderation! in moderation!" said the old man, waving his hand. "I don't want her to be watched night and day; something must be left to Lucy herself."

"Ah!" said Ford, drawing a long breath. He had the air of a man who was ready to patrol under his ward's window with a pair of pistols. "Lucy has a great deal of sense, but to expose a girl to the wiles of a set of fortune-hunters is what I would never do—and with that worldly-minded old woman. Ah! Mr. Trevor, you're too kind, you're too kind. Lady Randolph is not one that would step out of her own sphere for nothing. It isn't any desire she has to be kind to you."

"Her own sphere," said Mr. Trevor. "Money levels all spheres. And Lucy is an heiress, which makes her equal to a prince of the blood. But," he added with a chuckle, snapping his fingers, "*that* for the fortune-hunters! I've put bolt and bar between them and their prey. It's all done in black and white, and I don't know who can go against it. Listen Ford.

"It is further my wish, and I hereby stipulate that my said daughter, Lucy, shall contract no marriage up to the age hereinafter mentioned without the consent of the following parties, who will consider themselves

as a sort of committee for the disposal of her hand, and whom I hereby appoint and constitute her guardians, so far as this subject is concerned; it being fully understood that this appointment does not confer any power or authority over her pecuniary concerns. The committee which I thus charge with the arrangement of her marriage is to consist of the three persons above mentioned, to wit, Dame Elena Randolph, Richard Ford, and Susan Ford, his wife, with the following assessors added:—Robert Rushton, Esq., town-clerk of Farafield, my old friend; the Rev. William Williamson, of the Congregational Chapel, my pastor; and Mrs. Maria Stone, schoolmistress, of the same place——"

"But, Mr. Trevor!" Ford ejaculated with a gasp. The paragraph he had just listened to took away his breath.

"Well? Out with your objections; let us hear them," said old Trevor, turning upon him, brisk, and lively, and ready for war.

"Objections! yes, I cannot deny it, I have objections," said Ford hesitating. "Mr. Trevor, you know better than I do, you that have had such quantities of money passing through your hands; but——"

"Out with it," said Trevor; he rubbed his hands. It was an amusement the more to him to have his arrangements questioned.

"You can't have taken everything into consideration. Six people—*six*, all so different. If she has to get all their consents, she will never marry at all."

"And no great harm done either," said old Trevor briefly, "if that is all. Why should she marry? A woman who is poor, who wants somebody to work for

her, that is comprehensible; but a woman with a lot of money, there is no reason why she shouldn't stay as she is. What should she get married for?"

Ford scratched his head; he did not quite make it out. This was a challenge to all his convictions. It touched, he felt, the very first prerogative of man. Where were all true foundations of primal supremacy and authority to go to, if it were once set up as a rule that marriage was no longer necessary to womankind?

"It's always a good thing for a woman to marry," he said hoarsely. Many a radical opinion he had heard from his lodger, but never anything so sweeping as this.

"Ah! you think so," said old Trevor. "There was poor Lucilla, to go no further. She might have been alive yet, and enjoying her good fortune, if she had not married me."

This disturbed still more the man of orthodox ideas; he could do nothing but stare at the old revolutionary. What might he not say next?

"I suppose," he said, after a while, "poor Lucilla would never have hesitated; she was a woman who never considered her own comfort, in comparison with doing her duty."

"Her duty, poor soul! how was it her duty to marry me? Poor thing, I've always been very sorry for her," said Trevor, "Women have hard times in this world. But a girl with a great fortune, she may be kept out of it." Here he paused, while his companion sat opposite to him, his very mouth open with amazement. It was indeed more than amazement, it was consternation which filled the honest mind of

Richard Ford. He did not know what to think of this; was it a new phase of Radicalism worse than any that had gone before? He would have said it was Popery if he had not known how far from any ideas of that description his old friend was. While he sat thus half stupefied with astonishment, old Trevor took up his pen again hastily. "Now I think of it," he said, "Lucy belongs to the country, I don't hold much with the Church, but the Church should have a hand in it. I'll add the Rector to the committee. That will be only a proper respect."

"The Rector!" said Ford, pale with wonder, "and Mr. Williamson at the chapel, and Mr. Rushton, and Mrs. Stone, and me!——"

"You forget Lady Randolph," said old Trevor with a chuckle, "that's exactly as it ought to be, all classes represented, the right thing for a girl in Lucy's position. To tell the truth," he added, laying down his pen, "I don't know that there ever was a girl in Lucy's position before. It's a very fine position, and I hope she's been brought up to feel all the responsibilities. I don't want to brag of myself; but given an unusual situation like hers, and I think I've hit the right thing for it. When you are born a great lady that's different; but a girl with the greatest fortune in England, proceeding out of the lower classes—"

"I don't see," said Ford, aggrieved, "that we need call ourselves the lower classes; the middle—that is about what it is—the middle class—the strength of the country."

"Bosh!" said Trevor; "she will go to Lady Randolph's, and there she will see fine people, and no

doubt she'll be courted. There is nobody like them for knowing the value of money; and then she will come to you, Dick Ford, where she will see nobody, or else a few young clerks and that sort."

"I assure you," said Ford solemnly, "I will take care that she shall see no one here; not a man shall enter the house, not a creature come near her, while she is under my care."

"That will be lively for Lucy," said the old man, "you numskull! if she never sees anyone how is she to make a choice."

"Mr. Trevor," said Ford with a voice so solemn and serious that it trembled, "you would not wish your heiress to make a choice among the young clerks? Whom you say," he added after a moment in a tone of offence, "she will meet here."

"She is not *my* heiress, you stupid fellow. She is Lucilla's heiress, poor Rainy's heiress; what was he but a young clerk? Why shouldn't she if she likes marry into her own class? That's your snobbishness, Ford. You will find nothing of that in me. If she likes a man who is in the same rank of life as Rainy was when he began to make his fortune, or as I was (when I was that age) why let her marry him in heaven's name and be happy—that is," said old Trevor chuckling, "if she can get her guardians to consent."

"Mr. Trevor," said Ford hurriedly, with the tremulousness of real feeling, "I must protest, I must really protest. I am very conscious of the great kindness you are showing to us; but I cannot sit quiet and see poor Lucy doomed to such a fate. She will never get all her guardians to consent. Put it into one

person's hands, whom you please, but for goodness' sake don't leave the poor thing to fight with half-a-dozen; the end will be that she will never be married at all."

"And that won't kill her," said Trevor, "do you think I want her to marry? Not a bit, not a bit. 'She is better if she so abide.' Don't you know who said that? And I agree with St. Paul, whatever you may do."

Now the idea of not agreeing with St. Paul was terrible to Ford; it scandalised him utterly: for he was a Low Churchman, and much devoted to the writer of the Epistles.

"There never could be any question on that point," he said, "if you ask me whether I believe in my Bible, Mr. Trevor! but I cannot pretend that I understand that passage. There is more in it, I make bold to say, than meets the eye. There's a type in it, or a similitude. I am not a learned man, I can't tell you what it is in the original, but there's more in it than we think."

Old Trevor laughed—he was quite as staunch a believer as his friend: but being a Congregationalist, he was naturally a little more at his ease on such subjects than even the lowest of Churchmen. He was not shocked by the idea that it might be possible not to agree with St. Paul, and he was not so sure of the hidden meaning.

"It is quite enough for me as it stands," he said, "and as for Lucy's marriage—"

Here there was an interruption that startled these old conspirators. Little Jocky, who had been lying as still as a mouse at their feet, with no movement except

that of turning a leaf of his book, now began to stir. They had forgotten his very existence, as they often did. He had not been paying much attention to them, but probably he had heard other sounds more interesting to him, which they on the other hand had taken no notice of. At this stage he suddenly jumped up on his feet like a little acrobat, startling them greatly. He was not at all unlike an acrobat with his long slim pliable limbs, and his faded suit of blue velveteen, a little short in the arms, and white in the seams. He got up with a bound, like a thing on springs, immediately under Mr. Ford's nose, who was much discomfited by the sudden movement. It was a thing that had happened before, but Mr. Ford had confessed that it was not a thing to which he could accustom himself. He was not used to children, and he was nervous; little Jock's jump made him jump too.

"What is it? What is the matter?" he cried.

But just then the door opened softly behind the screen, and a soft voice said, "I have come home, papa, I have come to take Jock for his walk. Do you want anything?"

"Not that I know of, my dear, not that I know of; except yourself, and I shall have you by and bye," said the old man, his countenance expanding. She was not visible behind the high screen, but her voice seemed to throw a new element, something of softness and comfort into the air.

"At tea, papa. Come, Jock," said the voice, and the little fellow was gone almost before the words were said. The two old men sat quite silent, and listened to the steps going down the stairs. It was

not an unusual incident, but it is scarcely possible not to feel an uneasy sensation when you have been discussing, much more deciding, the fate of another, and suddenly that other looks in and interrupts your secret combinations by the sound of an innocent and affectionate voice. Such unconsciousness is more trying to a conspirator than any suspicion of his motives. Even when it is a private consultation between a father and mother on the expediency of sending a child to school, with what compunctions the sudden appearance of the unconscious victim overwhelms them! Old Trevor himself was moved by it, though he was not a likely subject for penitence.

"She hasn't much notion what we're settling," he said. "Poor little Lucy, I wonder if it's a good thing for a bit of a girl to have such a fate before her. But it is a fine position—a fine position; not many have such a chance, and I hope I've bred her up to understand what it is."

"Poor child," Ford breathed, in a sigh which was not unmingled with personal feeling, for notwithstanding the substantial advantages promised to him, and the gratifying character of the trust conferred, there already began to appear before the good man, not too confident in his own firmness or force of character, a crowd of difficulties to come. How would he be able to resist if a fine lady like Lady Randolph took him in hand? And how would Susan stand out against cajoling. He sighed, beginning to foresee that it would not be unmixed happiness to be Lucy's guardian even for six months in the year. But Lucy's appearance, or rather Lucy's voice, had disturbed the sitting effectually. Mr. Trevor folded up his blue

manuscript, and put it back into the blotting-book, and he lifted the "Times" from the little table on which it had been spread out, and once more arranged it on his knees.

"We'll go into further detail," he said, "another time. I'll give you the help of all my lights, Dick Ford. You'll want them to steer your way clear, and you can tell Susan there shan't be any want of money. That is what she'll think of first."

"I hope, Mr. Trevor, that you don't think money is the only thing we think of, either Susan or me."

"It is a very important thing," said the old man. "I have been poor, and now I am rich, and it isn't a matter that will let itself be kept in the background. But you shall have plenty of money, tell Susan so, and for other things you must do your best."

"I hope we'll do that in any case," Ford said devoutly, and he went downstairs with nervous solemnity, holding his head very high. He was very conscientious even in the smallest matters, and it may be supposed that this tremendous call upon him, as soon as he began to realise it, went to the very depths of that conscience which was alert and anxious in the minutest affairs. Old Trevor watched him disappear behind the screen, waited till the door had audibly closed behind him, then with a chuckling laugh resumed his newspaper.

"I've given *him* something to think about," he said, with a grin of mischievous satisfaction to himself.

CHAPTER IV.

SISTER AND BROTHER.

FROM the two old men and their consultations it was a relief, even in that chilly and dismal day, to get outside into the free air, though it was heavy with the chill of moisture turning into frost. It was not a cheerful world outside. The sky was the colour of lead, and hung low in one uniform tint of dulness over the wet world, with all its wetness just on the point of congealing. The common stretched out its low green broken lines and brown divisions of path to touch the limited horizon. Mrs. Stone's school, the big white house which stood on the north side, had a sort of halo of mist hanging round it, and everything that moved moved drearily, as unable to contend against the depression in the air. But little Jock Trevor was impervious to that depression; it was the moment of all the twenty-four hours in which he was happy. Though he had lain as still on the rug as if there was no quicksilver at all in his little veins, he could scarcely stand quietly now to have his little greatcoat put on, which his sister did with great care. She was seventeen, a staid little person, with much composure of manners, dressed in a grey walking-dress, trimmed with grey fur, very neat, comfortable, and sensible, but not quite becoming to Lucy, who was of that kind of fair complexion which tends towards greyness; fair hair, with no colour in it, and a face more pale than rosy. Ill-natured people said of her that she was all the same colour, hair, cheeks, and eyes—which was not true, and yet so far true as to make the grey

dress the least favourable envelope that could have been chosen. There was no irregularity of any kind about her appearance; all was exact, the very impersonation of neatness; a ribbon awry, an irregularity of line anywhere, would have been a relief, but no such relief was afforded to the spectator. Whoever might be found fault with for untidiness in Mrs. Stone's establishment, it never was Lucy; her collars were always spotless; her ribbons always neatly tied; her dress, the very perfection of good order and completeness. She put on her brother's little coat, and buttoned it to the last button, though he was dancing all the time with impatience; then enveloped his throat with a warm woollen scarf, and tucked in the ends. "Now your gloves, Jocky," she said, and she would not move till he had dragged these articles on, and had them buttoned in their turn. "What does it matter if you are two minutes earlier or later," she said, "you silly little Jock; far better to have them buttoned before you go out than to struggle with them all the way. Now have you got your handkerchief, and has your hat been brushed properly? Well," Lucy added, surveying him with mingled satisfaction in the result and reluctance to allow it to be complete, "now we may go."

If she had not held him by the hand, there is no telling what caracoling Jock might have burst into by way of exhausting the first outburst of exhilaration. The contact with the fresh air, though it was not anything very lively in the way of air, moved all the childhood in his veins. He strained Lucy's arm, as a hound strains at a leash, jumping about her as they went on. Almost her staid steps were beguiled out

of their usual soft maidenly measure by the gambols of the little fellow.

"Let's have a run to the gate," he said. "Oh, Lucy, come, run me to the gate," and he dragged at her hand to get loose from its hold. But, when he escaped, Jock did not care to run alone. He came back to her, out of breath.

"I wish I could have a real run—just once," he said with a sigh; then brightening up, "or a wrestling like Shakespeare—I'll tell you who I'd like to be, Lucy, I'd like to be Orlando when he had just killed that big bully of a man——"

"Jock! you wouldn't like to kill anyone, I hope."

"Oh, shouldn't I!" cried the boy; "just to see him go down, and turn over on his face, and clench his hands. Do they always do that, I wonder? You see them in the pictures all with their fists clenched, clawing at the ground. Well," he added with magnanimity, "he needn't quite die, you know; I'd like him only to be badly hurt, as bad as if he were killed, and then to get better. I daresay," said the child, "Charles got better, you know, after Orlando threw him. It isn't said that he was regularly killed."

"Is it a pretty story you've been reading, dear?" said Lucy sweetly, altogether ignorant of Orlando. And she was not ashamed of her ignorance, nor did Jock know that she had any reason to be ashamed.

"That's the best bit," he said impartially. "The rest is mostly about girls. It was the Duke's wrestler, you know, a big beast like—oh, I don't know anybody so big—a drayman," said Jock, as a big waggon lumbered by, laden with barrels, with one of those huge specimens of humanity (and beer) moving along like a

clumsy tower by its side. "Like *him;* and Orlando was quite young, you know, not so very big—like me, when I am grown up."

"You don't know what you will be when you are grown up, you silly little boy. Perhaps you will never grow up at all," said Lucy, somewhat against her conscience improving the occasion.

Jock stood for a moment with wide open eyes. Then resumed.

"I shan't be big or fat, like that fellow. When I am about seventeen, or perhaps twenty-two, and never taught to box or anything. I would have gone in at him," cried Jock, throwing out his poor arm, with a very tightly-clenched woollen glove at the end of it, "just like Orlando, just like this; and down he'd go like, like——" But imagination did not serve him in this particular. "Like Charles did," he concluded, with a dropping of his voice, which betrayed a consciousness of the failure, not in grammar, but in force of metaphor. Jock's experience did not furnish any parallel incident.

"You must never fight when you grow up," said Lucy. "Gentlemen never do; except when they are soldiers, and have to go and fight for the Queen."

"Does the Queen want to be fighted for?" said Jock. "If any fellow was to bully her or hit her——"

"Oh!" cried Lucy horrified, "nobody would do that; but people sometimes go against the country, Jock, and then the people that are fighting for England are said to be fighting for the Queen."

Jock's mind, however, went astray in the midst of this discourse. There passed the pair in the road a very captivating little figure—a small boy, much

smaller even than Jock, with long fair locks streaming down his shoulders, in the most coquettish of dresses, mounted upon a beautiful cream-coloured pony, as tiny as its rider. What child could pass this little equestrian and not gaze after him? The children sighed out of admiration and envy when they saw him, for he was a very well-known figure about Farafield; but the elders shook their heads and said, "Poor child!" Why should the old people say, "Poor child!" and the young ones regard him with such admiring eyes? It was little Gerald Ridout, the son of the Circus proprietor. Nobody was better known. As he rode along, the most daring little rider, on his pretty little Arab, which was as pretty as himself, with his long flowing curls waving, there could have been no such attractive advertisement. The Circus travelled for a great part of the year, but its home was in Farafield, and everybody knew little Gerald. Jock fixed his glistening eyes upon him from the moment of his appearance—eyes that shone with pleasure and sympathy, and that wistful longing to be as beautiful and happy, which is not envy. There was nothing of the more hateful sentiment in little Jock's heart, but because he admired he would have liked to resemble, had that been within his power. He followed the child with his eyes as long as he was visible. Then he asked: "Do people who are rich have ponies, Lucy?" with much gravity and earnestness.

"Very often, dear, and horses too; but that poor little fellow is not rich, you know."

"I should like to be him," said Jock.

"A little circus-boy? to ride upon the stage, and have all the most horrid people staring at you?"

"And jump through the hoop, and gallop, gallop, and have a pony like that all to myself. Ah—h!" Jock cried with a long-drawn breath.

"Would you like a pony so very much, Jocky? Then some day you shall have one," said his sister in her tranquil voice. "I will buy you one when I am rich."

"Are you *soon* going to be rich?" said the little boy doubtfully. Like wiser people, he preferred the smallest bird in the hand to a whole aviary in the dim and doubtful distance. But Lucy had not a very lively sense of humour. She knew the circumstances better than he did, and said, "Hush! hush!" with a little awe.

"Not for a very long time, I hope," she said.

Her little brother looked at her with wondering eyes; but this mystery was too deep for him to solve. He had no insight into those deep matters which occupied his father's time, nor had he the least notion that Lucy's wealth depended upon that father's death, though it had all been discussed with so much detail day by day over his dreaming head.

"When you are rich, shall I be rich too, Lucy?" he said.

"I am afraid not, Jock; but if I am rich, it will not matter; you shall have whatever you please. Won't that do just as well?"

Jock paused and thought.

"Why shouldn't I be rich too?" he remarked. It was not said as a question; it was an observation. The fact did not trouble him, but *en passant* he noticed it as a thing which might perhaps want explaining. It was not of half so much importance, however, as the next thing that came into his head.

"I say, Lucy, do you think that boy on the pony has to go to school? What do you think he can be learning at school? I should like to go there too."

"When you go, it shall be to a much nicer place," she said with energy. "There is one thing I should like to be rich for, and that is for you, little Jock. You don't know anything at all yet. You ought to be learning Greek, and Latin, and mathematics, and a great many other things. It makes me quite unhappy when I think of it. I go to school, but it does not matter for me; and you are living all your time, not learning anything, reading nonsense on the hearth-rug. I could cry when I think of it," Lucy said. She said it very quietly, but this was vehemence in her.

Jock looked up at her with wondering eyes; for his own part he had no enthusiasm for study, nor except for the pleasure of being with the Circus boy, whom he vaguely apprehended as caracoling about the very vague place which his imagination conceived of as "school," on his pretty pony, had he any desire to be sent there; but it did not occur to him to enter into any controversy on the subject.

"Are you going up-town, Lucy?" he asked, "have you got to go to shops *again?* I wish you would buy all your ribbons at one time, and not be always, always buying more. Aunty Ford when she goes out goes to shops too, and you have to stand and stare about, and there's nothing to look at, and nothing to do."

"What would you like to do, Jock?"

"Oh, I don't know—nothing," said the boy; "if I had a pony I'd get up on its back and ride off a hundred miles before I stopped."

"The horse couldn't go a hundred miles, nor you either, dear."

"Oh yes, I could, or ten at least, and if I met anyone on the road I'd run races with him; and I'd call the horse Black Bess, or else Rosynant, or else Chiron; but Chiron wasn't only a horse you know, he was a horse-man."

"Well, dear," said Lucy calmly, "I wish you were a horseman too, if you would like it so very much."

"You don't understand," cried the child, "you don't understand! I couldn't be like Chiron; he had four legs, he was a man-horse. He brought up a little boy once, lots of little boys, and taught them. I say, Lucy, if Chiron was living now I should like to go to school to him."

"You are a silly little boy," said Lucy, "who ever heard of a schoolmaster that had four legs? I wonder papa lets you read so many silly books."

"They are not silly books at all, it is only because you don't know," said Jock, reddening. "Suppose we were cast on a desert island, what would *you* do? You don't know any stories to tell round the fire; but I know heaps of stories, I know more stories than anyone. Aunty Ford is pretty good," the little fellow went on reflectively, "*she* knows some; and she likes me to tell her out of Shakespeare, and about the Three Calendars, and the Genii in the Bottle, and that improves her mind; but if you were in a desert island what *should* you do? You don't know one story to tell."

"I should cook your suppers, and mend your clothes, and make the fire."

"Ah!" said the boy with a little contempt: "bread

and milk would do, you know, or when we shot a deer we'd just put him before the fire and roast him. We shouldn't want much cooking; and the skin would do for clothes."

"You would not be at all comfortable like that," said Lucy, gravely shocked by the savagery of the idea, "even Robinson Crusoe had to sew the skins together and make them into a coat; and how could you have milk," she added, "without some one to milk the cow?"

"I will tell you something that is very strange," said Jock, "Aunty Ford never read Robinson Crusoe; but she knows Christian off by heart, and all about Mary and Christiana and the children. And she knows the history of Joseph, and David, and Goliath; so you cannot say she is quite ignorant; and she makes me tell her quantities of things."

"You should not mix up your stories," said Lucy, "the Bible is not like other books. About Joseph and David and those other—" (Lucy had almost said gentlemen, which seemed the most respectful expression; but she paused, reflecting with a little horror that this was too modern and common a title for Bible personages.) "They are for Sunday," she went on, more severely, to hide her own confusion, "they are not like Robinson Crusoe or the Genii in the Bottle; you ought not to mix them all up."

"It is Christian that is the *most* Sunday," said Jock, "she explains it to me, and all what it means, about the House Beautiful and the ladies that lived there. There is a Punch, Lucy! and there's Cousin Philip; never mind him, but run, run, and let us have a good look at the Punch."

"I mustn't run," said Lucy holding him back, "and I cannot stand and look at Punch. If Mrs. Stone were to see me, she never would let me come out with you any more."

"Oh, run, run!" cried the little boy, straining at her hand like a hound in a leash. He had dragged her half across the street when Cousin Philip came up. This was the only other relative with whom Mr. Trevor had kept up any intercourse. He was the young man to whom the old schoolmaster had made over his school, and he too, like Lucy, was taking advantage of the half holiday. In Farafield, where young men were scarce, Philip Rainy had already made what his friends called a very good impression. He was not it was true (to his eternal confusion and regret) a University man; but neither was he a certificated schoolmaster. He had greatly raised the numbers of old John Trevor's school, and he occupied a kind of debateable position on the borders of gentility, partly because of his connection with the enriched family perhaps, but partly because his appearance and manners were good, and his aspirations were lofty from a social point of view. He had begun with a determination to resist steadily all claims upon him from below, and to assert courageously a right to stand upon the dais of Farafield society; and though there may be many discouragements in the path of a young man thus situated, it is astonishing how soon a steady resolution of this kind begins to tell. He had been five years in old John Trevor's school, and already many people accredited him with a B.A. to his name. Philip told no fibs on that or any subject that concerned his position. "When it was necessary," as he said, he was

perfectly frank on the subject; but there are so few occasions on which it is necessary to be explanatory, a modest man does not thrust himself before the notice of the world; and he was making his way—he was making an impression. Though he had been brought up a Dissenter like his uncle, he had soon seen the entire incompatibility of Sectarianism with society, and he had now the gratification of hearing himself described as a sound if moderate Churchman. And he was now permanently upon the list of men who were asked to the dinner parties at the Rectory, when single men were wanted to balance a superabundance of ladies, an emergency continually recurring in a country town. This of itself speaks volumes. Philip Rainy was making his way.

He was a slim and fair young man, bearing a family resemblance to his cousin Lucy; and he had always been very "nice" to Lucy and to Jock. He came up to them now to solve all their difficulties, taking Jock's eager hand out of his sister's, and arresting their vehement career.

"Stop here, and I'll put you on my shoulder, Jock; you'll see a great deal better than among the crowd, such a little fellow as you are; and Lucy will talk to me."

They made a very pretty group, as they stood thus at a respectful distance from Punch and his noisy audience, Jock mounted on his cousin's shoulder clapping his hands and crowing with laughter, while Lucy stood pleased and smiling talking to Philip, who was always so "nice." The passers-by looked at them with an interest which was inevitable in the circumstances. Wherever Lucy went, people looked at her and pointed

her out as the heiress, and naturally the young man who was her relation was the subject of many guesses and speculations. To see them standing together was like the suggestion of a romance to all Farafield. Were they in love with each other? Would she marry him? To suppose that Philip, having thus the ball at his foot, should not be "after" the heiress, passed all belief.

But the talk that passed between them, and which suggested so many things to the lookers-on, was of the most placid kind.

"How is my uncle?" Philip asked. Old John Trevor was not his uncle, but the difference between age and youth made the cousinship resolvable into a more filial bond, and it sounded much nearer, which pleased the young man. "May I come and see him one of these evenings, Lucy? I am dining out to-day and to-morrow; but Friday perhaps—"

"How many people you must know!" said Lucy, half admiring, half amused; for young persons at school have a very keen eye for everything that looks like "showing off."

"Yes, I know a good many people—thanks chiefly to you and my uncle.

"To me? I don't know anybody," said Lucy.

"But they know you; and to be cousin to a great heiress is a feather in my cap."

Lucy only smiled; she was neither pleased nor annoyed by the reference, her fortune was so familiar a subject to her. She said, "Papa will be glad to see you. But I must not stand here in the street, Mrs. Stone will be angry, and I think Jock must have seen enough."

"Don't knock my hat off, Jock; have you seen enough? I will walk with you to the Terrace," said Philip, and the little family group as they went along the street attracted a great deal of interest. What more natural than that Philip should be "nice" to his young cousins, and turn with them when he met them on a half holiday? and it is so good to be seen to have relations who are heiresses for a young man who is making his way.

CHAPTER V.

AFTERNOON TALK.

THE children, as they were called in the Terrace, came home just in time for tea. Mr. Trevor had changed the course of his existence for some time past. He who all his life had dined at two, and had tea at six, and "a little something" in the shape of supper before he went to bed, had entirely revolutionized his own existence by the troublesome invention of "late dinner," which Mrs. Ford thought was the suggestion of the Evil One himself. His reason for it was the same as that of many other changes which he had made at some cost to his own comfort, but he did not explain to anyone what this meant,—at least, if he did explain it, it was to Lucy, and Lucy was the most discreet of confidants. When she came in with her little brother, the Fords were seating themselves at the table in their parlour, on which was the tray and the tea-things, and a large plate of substantial bread and butter. Here Jock took his place with the old people, while Lucy went upstairs. She would have liked the

bread and butter too, but her father liked her to spend this hour with him, and he despised the modern invention of five o'clock tea, understanding that meal only, as the Fords did, who made themselves thoroughly comfortable, and had muffins sometimes, and a variety of pleasing adjuncts. Mr. Trevor was still sitting between the fire and the window when Lucy went upstairs. She had taken off her hat and out-door jacket, and went in to her father a spruce, little, grey maiden, with hair as smooth, and everything about her as neat as if she had just come out of a bandbox. In Mr. Trevor's rank of life, there is no personal virtue in a woman that tells like neatness. He looked at her with eyes full of fond satisfaction and pleasure. He had put away the "Times" from his knees, and now had a book, having finished his paper, which lasted him till about four o'clock, and then went downstairs to Mr. Ford. The books Mr. Trevor read were chiefly travels. He did not think novels were improving to the mind; and as for history and solid information at his age, what was the use of them? they could serve very little purpose in his case; though Lucy ought to read everything that was instructive. He put down his book open, on its face, on his knee when his daughter came in. His eyes dwelt upon her with genuine pleasure and pride as she took the chair in which Ford had been sitting. She had some knitting in her hand, which she began to work at placidly without looking at it. Lucy with her blue eyes, her fair, smooth hair, and her equally smooth grey dress without a crease in it, looked the very impersonation of good order and calm. She looked at her father tranquilly with a pleasant smile. She was no chattering girl with a necessity

of talk upon her. Even among the other girls at Mrs. Stone's, Lucy was never, as Mrs. Ford said, "one to talk." She waited for what should be said to her.

"Well!" said her father rubbing his hands, "and where have you been, Lucy, to-day?"

"Up into the High Street, papa."

"I think you are fond of the High Street, Lucy."

"I don't know. The Common is very wet, and Jock will run and jump. I don't like it in this weather. The High Street is dry and clean—at least, it is dry and clean in front of Ratcliffe's shop."

"And there are all the pretty things in the windows."

"I don't look at the things in the windows—what is the good? You would let me buy them all if I wanted them," said Lucy quietly.

"Every one!" said old Trevor with a chuckle. "Every one! you might have a new dress every day of the year, if you liked!"

Lucy smiled, she went on with her knitting. This delightful possibility did not seem to affect her much —perhaps, because it was a possibility.

"We met the little Circus boy on his pony," she said. "Jock thinks so much of him. Papa, you always let me have everything I want—might I have a pony for Jock? It would make him so happy."

"No," said old Trevor, succinctly. "For yourself as many as you like; but that sort of thing is not for the child. No, nothing of the sort."

"Why?" she said; with something which in Lucy was impatience and vexation. It was too slight a ruffling of the calm surface to have told at all in anyone else.

"Because, my dear, Jock must not have anything that is above his own rank in life. What should he do with a pony? He is not a gentleman's son to be bred up with foolish notions. It would be all the worse for him to find out the difference afterwards."

"But he is my brother," Lucy said, "and your son, papa. If he is not a gentleman's son, neither am I—How is he different from me? And do you think I can make such a difference when—when I am grown up—"

"You mean when I am dead? Say it out; isn't that what I'm always thinking of? The little boy, my dear," said old Trevor gravely, yet with his familiar chuckle breaking in, "is a mistake. He didn't ought to have been at all, Lucy. Now he's here we can't help it—we've got to put up with it; and we must make the best of him. We can't send him out of the world because it was a mistake his coming into it; but he must keep to his own rank in life."

"But, papa! if you would think a little—why should there be such a difference. I so rich—and if he is to have nothing—"

"He will be as well off as he has any right to be," said old Trevor. "I've laid by a little. Don't trouble yourself about Jock. What have you been doing to-day? That is the thing of the greatest importance. I want to know all my little lady is about."

"We had our French lesson," said Lucy, a little disturbed under her smooth surface; but the disturbance was so little that her father never found it out, "and—all the rest just as usual, papa."

"And can you understand what Mounsheer says? Can you talk to him? I used to know a few words

myself—but never to talk it," said the old man. His acuteness seemed to have deserted him, and turned into the most innocent simplicity—a little glow came upon his face. He was almost childishly excited on this point. "A few words were enough for me—what did I want with French? though things are altered now; and it's taught, I'm told, in every commercial academy, and the classics neglected—that wasn't the way in my time. If a boy learnt anything besides reading and writing, it was Latin—and I was considered very successful with my Latin."

"That is another thing, papa," said Lucy; "don't you think Jock should go to school?"

Old Trevor's face extended slightly. "Have you nothing to say to me, Lucy, but about Jock?"

"Oh yes! a great deal," said the girl. She did not lose a single change in his face, though she kept on steadily with her knitting, and she saw it was not safe to go farther. She changed the subject at once. "Monsieur says I get on very well," she said; "but not so well as Katie Russell. She is first in almost everything. She is so clever. You should hear her chatter French—as fast! It is like the birds in the trees, as pretty to listen to—and just as little sense that you can make out."

"Yes, yes, yes!" said the old man with a little impatience. "There is no occasion for *you* to learn like that, Lucy. She has to make her living by it, that girl. I wonder now, you that are in so very different a position, why it's always this Russell girl you talk about, and never any of the real ladies, the Honourable Miss Barringtons and Lady—what do you call her? and the better sort. It was for them I sent you

to Mrs. Stone's school, Lucy," he said with a tone of reproach.

"Yes, papa. I like them very well—they are just like me. They do as little work as they can, and get off everything they can. We had a famous ride—but that was yesterday. I told you about it. Lily Barrington's horse ran away, or we thought it ran away; and mine set off at such a pace! I was dreadfully frightened, but Lily liked it. She had done it on purpose, fancy! and thinks there is nothing in the world so delightful as a gallop."

"And you call her Lily," said Mr. Trevor, with a glow of pleasure, "that's right, my dear. That's what I like to hear. Not that I want you to neglect the others, Lucy; but you can always get a hold on the poor; no fear of them; I want you to secure the great ones too. I want you to know all sorts. You ought to with your prospects. I was saying to Ford to-day, a girl with your prospects belongs to England. The country has an interest in you, Lucy. You ought to know all sorts, rich and poor. That is just what I have been settling," he said, laying his hand on the blotting book now closed, in which his papers were.

Lucy gave him a little smile, nodding her head. She was evidently quite in the secret of the document there. But she did not stop her knitting, nor was she so much interested in that future which he was settling for her so carefully, as to ask any questions. Her little nod, her smile, which had a kind of indulgence in it, as for the vagaries of a child, her soft calm and indifference bore the strangest contrast to his absorption in all that concerned her. Perhaps the girl did not realise how entirely her future was being mapped out;

perhaps she did not realise that future at all. There was a touch of the gentlest youthful contempt for that foolish wisdom of our fathers to which we are all instinctively superior in our youth in her perfect composure. It amused him—though it was so odd that a man should be amused in such a way! and it did not matter any farther to her.

"Mrs. Stone sent her kind regards, papa, and she will gladly come over and take a cup of tea any time you like."

"Oh! she'll come, will she? I want to tell her of something I've put in the will," said old Mr. Trevor.

This roused Lucy from her composure. She looked at him with a half-startled glance.

"You will tell—her: of that paper?"

"Well, not much about it, only something that regards herself. You will be much sought after when I am gone. All sorts of people will be after you for your money; and I want to protect you, Lucy. It's my business to protect you; besides, as I tell you, you're too important to have just a couple of guardians like a little girl with ten thousand pounds. You belong to the country, my dear. A fortune like yours," said the old man, now launched upon his favourite subject, "is a thing by itself; and I want to protect you, my dear."

This time Lucy, instead of the smile, breathed a little sigh. It was a sigh of impatience, very momentary, very slight. This was the doctrine in which she had been brought up, and she would as soon have thought of throwing doubt upon the ten commandments as of denying that her own position made her of almost national importance. She was aware of all that; it was

merely the reiteration of it which moved her to the faintest amount of impatience; but this she very soon repressed.

"Is Mrs. Stone to protect me?" she said.

"She is to be one of them, my dear. You know I don't wish to do anything in secret, Lucy. I wish you to know all my arrangements. If you came to think afterwards that your father had taken you by surprise, I—should not like it; and now I have got as far as where you ought to live—listen, Lucy," said the old man. The big document in the writing case was evidently his one idea. His face brightened as he took it up and spread out the large leaves. As for Lucy, she sighed again very softly. How the will wearied her! but she was heroic, or stoical. She made no sort of stand against it; and after that one soft little protest of nature, went on with her knitting, and listened with great tranquillity. Her father read the paragraphs that he had been consulting Ford about, one by one; and Lucy listened as if he had been reading a newspaper. It awoke no warmer interest in her mind. She had heard so much of it that it did not affect her in any practical way; it seemed a harmless amusement for her father, and nothing more.

"Do you think you shall like going to Lady Randolph, Lucy?"

"How can I tell, papa? I don't know Lady Randolph," Lucy said.

"No: but that's high life, my dear; and here's humble life, Lucy. I want you to know both; and as for your marriage, you know—"

"You do not want me to marry," said the sensible girl, "and I don't think I wish it either, papa. But,

if I ever did, it would not be nice to have to go and ask all these people; and they never would agree. We might be quite sure of that."

"Then you think I have been hard upon you? Always speak to me quite openly, Lucy. I don't want to be hard upon you, my child, quite the other way."

"Oh, it does not matter at all," said Lucy cheerfully, plying her knitting needles, "I don't think it is the least likely that I shall ever want to marry; as you have always told me, I shall have plenty to do: and there will be Jock," she added after a momentary pause.

"You have a great many prejudices about Jock," her father said testily, "what difference can he make? He has not so very much to do with you, and he will be in quite a different sphere."

"Do you want me to have nobody belonging to me?" Lucy cried with a sudden vivacity not without indignation in it: then subdued herself as suddenly. "It doesn't at all matter," she said.

"And you remember," said her father almost humbly, "this is only till you are five-and-twenty. It is not for all eternity; you will have plenty of time to marry, or do whatever you please, after that."

Lucy nodded and smiled once more, "I don't think I shall want to marry," she said; but while she spoke she was making a quiet calculation of quite a different character. "Jock is eight and I am seventeen," she was saying within herself, "how old will Jock be when I am twenty-five?" It does not seem a difficult question; but she was not great in arithmetic, and it took her a moment or two to make it out. When she had succeeded her face brightened up, "Still young enough

to be educated," she added always within herself, and this quite restored her patience and her cheerfulness.

"It will be very funny," she said, "to see the Rector and Mr. Williamson consulting together. I wonder how they will begin: I am sure Mr. Williamson will put on coloured clothes to show how independent he is; and the Doctor—the Doctor will smile and rub his hands."

"You forget," said old Trevor with a slight sharpness of tone, though he laughed, "that such things have been as that I should outlive the Doctor. He's younger than I am, to be sure, but I would not have you to calculate on my death before the Doctor, It might be quite a different Rector. It might be a young man that would, perhaps, put in claims to the heiress himself. But I'll give you one piece of advice, Lucy, beforehand. Never marry a parson. They're always in the way. Other kinds of men have their occupations; but a parson with a rich wife is always lounging about. Your mother used to say so; and she was a very sensible woman. She had an offer from one of the chapel ministers when she was young; but she would have nothing to say to him. A man in slippers, always in-doors, was what she never could abide."

"I don't think the Rector would be like that, papa," said Lucy, "he doesn't look as if he ever wore slippers at all—"

"Well, perhaps it is the other kind I am thinking of," said Mr. Trevor, who had not much acquaintance with the class which he called "Church parsons," though his liberality of mind was such that he had brought up Lucy partially, at least, as a Church-woman. His conduct, in this respect, was much the same as it was

in reference to the distinctions of society. He wanted her to have her share in all—to be familiar alike with poverty and riches, and as a kind of moral consequence with Church and Chapel too.

It was almost a disappointment to the old man that Lucy let the subject drop, and showed no farther interest in it. He was a great deal more excited about her future life than she was. Lucy's life was, indeed, to her father, at once, his great object and his pet plaything. It was his determination that it should be such a life as no one had ever lived before; a perfection of beneficence, wisdom, well-doing, and general superiority. He wanted to guard her against all perils, to hedge her round from every enemy. Unfortunately, he knew very little of the world the dangers of which he was so intent on avoiding; but he was quite unaware of his own ignorance. He foresaw the well-known danger of fortune-hunters; but he did not perceive the impossibilities of the arrangement by which he had, he flattered himself, so carefully and cleverly guarded against them. In this respect, Lucy had more insight than her father, in her gentle indifference. Her life was not a matter of theory to Lucy. It was not a thing at all to be moulded and formed by anyone; it was to-day and to-morrow. She listened to, without being affected by, all her father's plans for her. They seemed a dream—a story to her; the future to which they referred was quite unreal in her eyes.

"We met Philip, papa," she said, after a pause, with her usual tranquillity. "He is always very nice to Jock. He put him upon his shoulder to see the 'Punch.' And he says he is coming to see you."

"You met Philip," said the old man. "And he is

coming to see me? Well, let him come, Lucy. He is a rising man, and a fine gentleman—too fine for a homely old man like me. But we are not afraid of Philip. Let him come: and let us hope he will find his match when he comes here."

"You do not like Philip, papa? I think he is the only person you are—not quite just to. What has he done? He is always very nice to Jock, and—" Lucy added hastily in a tone of conciliation, "to me too."

"Done?" said the old man with a snarl in place of his usual chuckle. "He has done nothing but what is virtuous. He has doubled the school, and he sets up for being a gentleman. Don't you know that I have the highest opinion of Philip? I always say so; the best of young men—and he calls me uncle, though he is only my wife's distant cousin, which is very condescending of him. Not to approve of Philip would be to show myself a prejudiced old fool—and—" Mr. Trevor added after a pause, showing his old teeth in yellow ferocity, not unmixed with humour, "that is exactly what I am."

Lucy looked at him with her peaceful blue eyes. She shook her head in mild disapproval. "He is very nice to Jock—and to me too," she repeated softly. But she made no further defence of her cousin. This was all she said.

CHAPTER VI.

PHILIP.

PHILIP RAINY was, as his relation had been obliged to avow, an excellent young man; there was nothing to be found fault with in his moral character, and everything to be applauded in his manners and habits. He had acquired his education in the most laborious way, at the cheapest possible rate, and he had used it, since he was in a condition to do so, in the most admirable manner. He was intelligent and amiable as well as prudent and ambitious, and though he meant to establish a reputation for himself, and a position among those who were considered best in Farafield, yet he never forgot his family, whom he had left behind; nor, though he did not think it necessary to brag that he had begun the world in the lowliest way, did he ever, when it was called for, shrink from an avowal of his origin, humble as that was. Why old Mr. Trevor should dislike him it would be difficult to say, or rather, though it might be easy enough to divine the causes, it would be almost impossible to offer any justification of them. Old Trevor disliked the young man because—he was so altogether unexceptionable a young man. Every inducement that could have led an old man to patronize and encourage a young one existed here, and yet these very reasons why he should like Philip made his old relation dislike him. He was too good, and, alas, too successful. He had doubled the school in Kent's Lane, which the old gentleman, distracted by other occupations, had brought down very

low indeed, and this was something which it was rather hard to forgive, though it was worthy of nothing but praise. And he was Lucy's cousin, on the side of the house from which the fortune came, and perfectly suitable to Lucy in point of age, and in almost every way. How much trouble it would have avoided, how much ease and security it would have given, if Philip had been placed in Lucy's way and an attachment encouraged between them! It would have been the most natural thing in the world; it would have restored the fortune to the name, it would have enriched the family of the original possessor, it would have saved all the trouble of the will which old Trevor was elaborating with so much care. Therefore it was that old Trevor detested Philip Rainy, or, at least, was so near detesting him that only Christian principle prevented that climax of feeling. As it was, with a distinct effort because the sentiment was wrong, the old man restrained his conscious dislike of the young one within the bounds of what he considered permissible hostility. But all he could do, could not entirely control that fierce impulse of repugnance. He could not keep his voice from altering, his expression from changing, when Philip Rainy's name was mentioned. Perhaps, at the bottom of all his anxiety about Lucy's fortune, and his desire to shape and control her actions, was an underlying dread that Lucy's fate might be lying quite near, and might be decided at any moment before ever his precautions could come into effect.

Philip himself had no conception how far the dislike of his uncle—as he called old Trevor, without being in the least aware that this of itself was an offence—went. He did not even know that it was

only to himself that the old man was so systematically ill-tempered. It was seldom he saw old Trevor in the society of other people, and he took it for granted, with much composure, that the sharpness of his jibes and the keenness of his criticisms were natural, and employed against the world in general as well as against himself. Being a young man determined to rise in the world, it was not to be supposed that he had not taken the whole question of his family connections into earnest consideration, or that he was entirely unmoved by the consciousness that within his reach, and accessible to him in many ways not possible for other men, was one of the greatest prizes imaginable, an heiress, whose soft little hand could raise him at once above all the chance of good or evil fortune, and confer upon him a position far beyond anything that was within his possibilities in any other way. On this latter point, however, he was not at all clear; for Philip was young, and had not learned to know these inexorable limits which hem in possibility. He thought he could do a great many things by his unaided powers, which he would have easily seen to be impossible for anyone else. He believed in occasions arising which would give scope to his talents, and show the world what manner of man it was which the irony of fate confined to the humble occupation of a schoolmaster in a little country town; and he entertained no doubt that when the occasion came he would show himself worthy of it. Therefore he was not sure that Lucy's fortune could do much more for him than he could do for himself; but he was too sensible to ignore the difference it would make in his start, the great assistance it would be in his career. It

would give him an advantage of ten years, he said to himself, in the musings of that self-confidence which was so determined and arrogant, yet so simple; a difference of ten years—that stands for a great deal in a man's life. To attain that at thirty which in ordinary circumstances you would only attain at forty, is an advantage which is worthy many sacrifices; but yet, at the same time, if you are sure of attaining at forty, or by good luck at thirty-nine, the good fortune on which your mind is set, it is not perhaps worth your while to make a very serious sacrifice of your self-esteem or pride merely for the sake of saving these ten years. This was why Philip maintained with ease so dignified and worthy a position in respect to his heiress-cousin. She would make a difference of ten years—but that was all; and besides being a young man determined to get on in the world, he was a young man who gave himself credit for fine feelings, and independence of mind, and generosity of sentiment. He could not, at this early stage of his existence, have come to a mercenary decision, and made up his mind to marry for money. He did not see any necessity for it; he felt quite able to encounter fate in his own person; therefore, though he did not refuse to acknowledge that it would be a very good thing to marry an heiress, and very pleasant if the woman with whom he fell in love should belong to that class, he had not proposed to himself the idea either of trying to fall in love with Lucy, or attempting to secure her affections to himself. The idea of her hovered before his mind as a possibility—but there were many other possibilities hovering before Philip, and some more enticing, more attractive, than any heiress. Therefore he did not spoil

his own prospects by perpetual visits, or by paying her anything that could be called "attention" in the phraseology of the drawing-room. His relations with her were no more than cousinly; he was very "nice;" but then he was even more "nice" to little Jock, who was not his relation at all, than to Lucy. It was part of his admirable character that he was fond of children, and always good to them, so that no suspicion could possibly attach to the very moderate amount of intercourse which was conducted on so reasonable a footing. But the more it was reasonable, the more it was cousinly, the more did old Trevor dislike his child's relation; he had not the slightest ground for fault-finding, therefore his secret wrath was nursed in secret, and grew and increased. It was all he could do to receive Philip with civility when he came. He came in after dinner in a costume carefully adapted to please, or at least to disarm all objections, a compromise between morning and evening dress; and he made judicious inquiries after the old man's health, not too much, as if there was anything special in his solicitude, but as much as mingled politeness and family affection required.

"I hope you are standing the cold pretty well, Sir," he said; "spring is always so trying. I can bear the winter better myself; at all events, one does not expect anything better in December, and one makes up one's mind to it."

"At your age," said old Trevor, "it was all the same to me, December or July; I liked the one as much as the other. But I think we might find something better to talk of than the weather; every idiot does that."

"That is true," said the young man, "it is always the first topic among English people. With our uncertain climate——"

"I never was out of England, for my part," the old man interrupted him sharply. "English climate is the only climate I know anything about. I don't pretend to be superior to it, like you folks that talk of Italy and so forth. What have I got to do with Italy? It may be warmer, but warm weather never agreed with me."

"I have never been out of England either," said the young man, with that persistence in the soft word that turns away wrath, which is of all things in the world the most provoking to irritable people; and then he changed the subject gently, but not to his own advantage. "I thought you would like to hear, Uncle, how well everything is going on in Kent's Lane. I am thinking of an assistant, the boys are getting beyond my management; indeed, if things go on as they are doing, I shall soon have enough to do managing, without teaching at all. I have heard of a very nice fellow, a University man. Don't you think that on the whole that would be an advantage? people think so much more, nowadays,—for the mere teaching, you know, only for the teaching—of a man with a degree."

"A man with a fiddlestick!" said old Trevor. "The question is, are you going into competition with Eton and Harrow, Mr. Philip Rainy, or are you the master of a Commercial Academy? that's the question. The man that founded that establishment hadn't got a degree, no, nor wouldn't have accepted one if they had gone on their knees to him. He knew his place, and the sort of thing that was expected from him. Oh,

surely, get your man with a degree! or go and buy a degree for yourself (it's a matter of fees more than anything else, I have always heard,) and starve when you have got it. But I'd like you to hand over Kent's Lane first to somebody that will carry it on as it used to be."

"I beg your pardon with all my heart, Uncle," cried the young man. "I have not the least intention of abandoning Kent's Lane. It's my sheet-anchor, all I have in the world: and I would not alter the character you stamped upon it for any inducement. The only thing is, that so much more attention is paid to the classics nowadays——"

"Curse nowadays, Sir!" cried old Trevor, his countenance glowing with anger. Then he pulled himself up, and recollected that such language was far from becoming to his age and dignity, not to speak of his Christian principles. "I shouldn't have said that," he added in a subdued tone; "I don't wan't to curse anything. Still I don't know what the times are coming to with all these absurd novelties. The classics (he had been boasting of his Latin an hour before) for a set of shop-keepers' sons that want to know how to add up their fathers' books! It's folly and nonsense, that's what it is. Even if you could do it, what's the advantage of snipping all classes out on the same pattern? It's a great deal better to have a little difference. Women, too—you'd clip them all out like images in paper, the same shape as men. It's a pity," he added grimly, "that your classics and your degrees don't do more for those that have got them. Many an M.A. I've seen in my time tacked to the names of the biggest fools I've ever known."

"Still it is not necessary to be a big fool, Sir, because you are an M.A.," said Philip, always mildly, but with a sigh. "It is a great advantage to a man: I wish I had it. I know what you will say, better men than I have not had it; but just because I am not a better man—"

For the first time old Trevor broke into his habitual chuckle. "Give him some tea, Lucy," he said. "I suppose you're one of the fashionable kind and have your dinner when I used to have my supper. That's not the way to thrive, my lad."

"What does it matter whether you call it dinner or supper, Sir?" said Philip, "and pardon me, don't you do the same?"

"It makes a deal of difference," said the old man. "Parents like to hear that you have your tea at six o'clock, and your supper at nine, like themselves. They don't like you to give yourself airs, as if you were better than they are. You're a clever fellow, Philip Rainy, and you think you are getting on like a house on fire. But you're a fool all the same."

"Papa, I wish you would not be so uncivil," said Lucy, who had as yet taken no part in their talk.

"I tell you he's a fool all the same. I kept Kent's Lane a-going for thirty years, and I ought to know. I've taught the best men in the town. Oxford fellows, and Cambridge fellows, and all sorts, have come to me for their mathematics, though I never had a degree; and I ate my dinner at two and my tea at six as regular as clock-work all the time. That's the way to do, if you mean to keep it up all your life, and lay by a little money, and leave the place to your son after you. If Jock had been older that's what I should have

made him do; that is the way to succeed in Kent's Lane."

There was a little pause after this, for Philip was a little angry too, and had not command for the moment of that soft word of which he made so determined a use; and at the same time he was resolved not to quarrel with Lucy's father. He said, after a while, in as easy a tone as he could assume,

"I wish you would let me have Jock. He is old enough for school now, and whatever you want to do with him I could always begin his education; of course, you will give him every advantage——"

"I will give him as good as I had myself, Philip, and as you had. Do you think I am going to take Lucy's money for that child? Not a penny! He shall be bred up according to his own rank in life; and by the time he's a man, you'll have grown too grand for the old place, and you can hand it over to him."

Philip opened his eyes in spite of himself.

"Then Lucy will be a great lady," he said, half laughing, "and her brother a little schoolmaster in Kent's Lane."

Lucy, who was standing behind her father at the moment, began to make the most energetic signs of dissent. She made her mouth into a puckered circle of inarticulate "No-o-s," and shook her head with vehement contradiction. Just below, and all unconscious of this pantomime, the old man grinned upon his visitor, delighted with the opportunity at once of declaring his intentions and of inflicting a salutary snub.

"That is exactly what I intend," he said, "you have hit it. Even if it hadn't been just, it would have

been a fine thing to do as an example; but it is *just* as well. Is a fine lady any better than a poor schoolmaster? not a bit! each one in the rank of life that is appointed, and one as good as another: that's always been my principle. I wouldn't have stepped out of my rank of life, or the habits of my rank of life, not if you had given me thousands for it; not, I promise you," cried old Trevor, with a snarl, "for the sake of being asked to dinner here and there, as some folks are; but being in my own rank of life I thought myself as good as the King; and that's why Lucy shall be a great lady and her brother a little schoolmaster, whether or not he's in Kent's Lane."

"But he shall not be so, papa, if I can help it," Lucy said.

"You won't be able to help it, my pet," said her father, relapsing into a chuckle, "not you, nor anyone else; that's one thing of which I can make sure."

The two young people looked at each other over his old head. They made no telegraphic signs this time. Philip was for the moment overawed by the old man's determination, while Lucy, the most dutiful of daughters, was mute in a womanly confidence of somehow or other finding a way to balk him. She had not in the least realized how her life was to be bound and limited by the imperious will of the father who grudged her nothing; but Lucy accepted it all quite tranquilly, whatever it might be—except this. When she went with her cousin to the door, she confided to him the one exception to her purposes of obedience.

"Papa does not think what he is saying; I never believe him when he talks like that. I to be rich and

Jock poor! He only says it for fun, Philip, don't you think?"

"It does not look much like fun," Philip said, with a rueful shake of his head.

"Well! but old people—old people are very strange; they think a thing is a joke that does not seem to us at all like a joke. I will do all that papa wishes, but not about Jock."

"And I hope you won't let him persuade you to think," said Philip, lingering with her hand in his to say good night, "that I am neglecting my work, or giving myself airs, or——"

"Oh, that is only his fun," said Lucy, nodding her head to him with a pleasant smile as he went out into the night.

She was not pretty, he thought, as he walked away, but her face was very soft, and round, and pleasant; her blue eyes very steady and peaceful, with a calmness in them which, in its way, represented power. Philip, who was, though so steady, somewhat excitable, and apt to be fretted and worried, felt that the repose in her was consolatory and soothing. She would be good to come home to after a man had been baited and bullied in the world. He had thought her an insignificant little girl, but to-night he was not so sure that she was insignificant; and Philip did not know anything at all about the will and its iron rod.

CHAPTER VII.

THE WHITE HOUSE.

THE life of Lucy Trevor, at this period, was divided between two worlds, very dissimilar in constitution. The odd household over which her father's will and pleasure was paramount, though exercised through the medium of Mrs. Ford, and in which so many out of the way subjects were continually being discussed, all with some personal reference to the old man and his experiences and crotchety principles of action, occupied one part of her time and thoughts; but the rest of her belonged to another sphere—to the orderly circle of studies and amusements of which the central figure was Mrs. Stone, and the scene the White House, a large irregular low building on the edge of the Common, which was within sight of Mr. Trevor's windows in the Terrace, and had appeared, through all the mist and fog of those wintry days, with a kind of halo round its whiteness like that of a rainy and melancholy old moon, tumbled from its high place to the low levels of a damp and flat country. Mrs. Stone's was known far and wide as the best school for a hundred miles round, the best as far as education was concerned, and also the most exclusive and aristocratic. Lucy Trevor was the only girl in Farafield who was received as a day pupil. Efforts had been made by people of the highest local standing to procure the admission of other girls of well-known families in the town, but in vain. And why Mrs. Stone had taken Lucy, who was nobody, who was only old John Trevor's daughter, was a mystery to her

best friends. She had offended a great many of the townspeople, but she had flattered the local aristocracy, the county people, by her exclusiveness; and she offended both by the sudden relaxation of her rule on behalf of Lucy. The Rector's daughter would have been a thousand times more eligible, or even Emmy Rushton, whose mother had knocked at those jealous doors in vain for years together; and why should she have taken Lucy Trevor, old John's daughter, who was nobody, who had not the faintest pretension to gentility? Lady Langton drove in, as a kind of lofty deputation and representative of the other parents who had daughters at Mrs. Stone's school, to remonstrate with her, and procure the expulsion of the intruder; but Mrs. Stone was equal to the occasion. She did not hesitate to say to the Countess: "Your ladyship is at liberty to remove Lady Maud whenever you please. I dispense with the three months' notice."

It was this speech which established Mrs. Stone's position far more than her excellence in professional ways. A woman who dared to look a Countess in the face, and make such a suggestion, was too wonderful a person to be contemplated save with respect and awe. Lady Langton herself withdrew, abashed and confounded, protesting that to take Maud away was the last idea in her mind. And Mrs. Stone's empire was thus established. The incident made a great impression on the county generally. And it nearly threw into a nervous fever the other mistress, conjointly with Mrs. Stone, of the White House, her sister Miss Southwood (called, as a matter of course, Southernwood by the girls), who stood by aghast, and heard her say: "I dispense with the three months' notice;" and ex-

pected nothing less than that the sky should fall, and the walls crumble in round them. Miss Southwood liked to think afterwards that it was her own deprecating glances, her look of horror and dismay, and, above all, the cup of exquisite tea which she offered Lady Langton as she waited for her carriage which put everything straight; but all her civilities would never have established that moral ascendency which her sister's uncompromising defiance secured.

Miss Southwood was the elder of the two. She was forty-five or thereabouts, and she was old-fashioned. Whether it was by calculation, to make a claim of originality for herself, such as it was, or simply because she thought that style becoming to her, nobody knew; but she dressed in the fashions which had been current in her youth, and never changed. She wore her hair in a knot fastened by a high comb behind, and with little ringlets drooping on either cheek; and, amid the long and sweeping garments of the present era, wore a full plain skirt which did not touch the ground, and *gigot* sleeves. In this dress she went about the house softly and briskly, without the whisking and rustling of people in long trains. She was a very mild person in comparison with her high-spirited and despotic sister; but yet was gifted with a gentle obstinacy, and seldom permitted any argument to beguile her from her own way. She had, nominally, the same power in the house as Mrs. Stone, and it was partly her money which was put in peril by her sister's audacity; but the elder had always been faithful to the younger, and though she might grumble, never failed to make common cause with her, even in her most heroic measures. As for Lucy Trevor, though she shook her head, she submitted,

feeling that to suffer on behalf of an heiress was a pain from which the worst sting was taken out; for it was not to be supposed that a girl so rich could allow her schoolmistress to come to harm on her account. Mrs. Stone was far more imposing in appearance. She was full five years younger, and she was not old-fashioned. She was tall, with a commanding figure, and her dresses were handsome as herself, made by an *artiste* in town, not by the bungling hands of the trade in Farafield, of rich texture, and the most fashionable cut. She was a woman of speculative and theoretical mind, believing strongly in "influence," and very anxious to exercise it when an opportunity occurred. She had her ideas, as Mr. Trevor had, of what might be made of an heiress; and it seemed to Mrs. Stone that there was no class in the world upon which "influence" might tell more, or be more beneficially exercised. Her ideas on this subject laid her open to various injurious suppositions. Thus, when she took Lady Maud Langdale into her bosom, as it were—moved by a brilliant hope of influence to be exercised on society itself by means of a very pretty and popular young woman of fashion—vulgar bystanders accused Mrs. Stone of tuft-hunting, and of paying special honour to the girl who was the daughter of an Earl, out of mere love of a title, an altogether unworthy representation of her real motive. And her sudden stand on behalf of Lucy took the world by surprise. They could not fathom her meaning: that she should have defied the Countess, whom up to this time she had been supposed to worship with a servile adulation, on account of a little bit of a girl of no particular importance was incomprehensible. It was known in Farafield that Lucy had a fortune, but it

was not known how great that fortune was, and after much groping among the motives possible to Mrs. Stone in the circumstances, the countrytown gossips had come to the conclusion that she aspired to a marriage with old John Trevor, and an appropriation to herself of all his wealth. This supplied a sufficient reason even for a breach with the Countess. To be asked to Langdale, which was the finest thing that could happen to her in connection with Lady Maud, was, though gratifying, not to be compared with the possibility of marrying a rich man in her own person, and becoming one of the chief ladies of Farafield. This was how it was accounted for by that chorus of spectators who call themselves society, and Miss Southwood herself entertained, against her will, the same opinion. This suggestion seemed to make everything clear.

A few days after that on which Mr. Trevor read to Ford the last paragraph which he had added to his will, Lucy tapped at the door of Mrs. Stone's private parlour with her father's message. The ladies were seated together in their private sanctuary, resting from their labours. It was a seclusion never invaded by the pupils except on account of some important commission from a parent, or to ask advice, or by order of its sovereigns. Lucy came in with the little old-fashioned curtsey which Mrs. Stone insisted upon, and made her request.

"If you would come to tea to-morrow night. Papa is very sorry, but he bids me say he thinks you know that he cannot come to you."

"How is Mr. Trevor, Lucy?"

Miss Southwood, who was looking at her sister anxiously, thought she asked this question by way of

gaining time. Could he have sent for her in order to propose to her, the anxious sister thought. What a very curious way of proceeding! but a rich old man, with one foot in the grave, could not be expected to act like other men.

"He is—just as he always is: very busy, always writing; but he cannot go out, and if you would be so kind——"

"Oh, yes, I will be so kind," said Mrs. Stone, with a smile; "it is not the first time, Lucy. Is he going to complain of you, or to tell me of something he wants for you?"

"I think," said Lucy, "it is about the will."

"Dear me!" Miss Southwood cried. "What can you have to do, Maria, with Mr. Trevor's will?"

Mrs. Stone smiled again.

"He goes on with it, then, as much as ever?" she said.

"Oh, yes, almost more than ever; it gives him a great deal of occupation," said Lucy, with a grave face. There were some things that she had it in her heart to say on this subject; she looked at the schoolmistress anxiously, not knowing if she might trust her, and then was silent, fearing to open her mind to anyone on the subject of Jock.

"Poor child! he is putting a great burden upon you at your age; the management of a fortune is too much for a girl; but, Lucy, you will always know where to find advice and help so far as I can give it. You must never hesitate to come to me, whatever happens," Mrs. Stone said.

"Thank you," said Lucy, in her tranquil way. She had read something in the schoolmistress's face, she

could not have told what, which sealed her lips in respect to Jock.

"Dear me!" cried Miss Southwood again, "you are both very mysterious; I should think nothing was easier than to manage a fortune. It is when one has no fortune that life is difficult to manage," she said with a sigh.

"The wonder is," said Mrs. Stone, calmly ignoring her sister's interruption, "that your father does not carry out some of his own views, Lucy, instead of leaving everything to you. It would be in your favour if he would take a larger house, and get together an establishment more befitting your prospects; I think I shall suggest this to him. He has always been very civil in listening to my suggestions. A proper establishment, all set in order in his lifetime, would be a great matter for you."

"But, Maria, Maria!" cried Miss Southwood, "think, for Heaven's sake! what you are doing; think what people will say. That *you* should suggest such a thing would never do."

Mrs. Stone turned round and looked at her with scathing indifference.

"What do people say?" she asked, and went on without waiting for an answer. "You ought to be living as becomes your future position," she said; "the associations you will form at present, and the habits you are acquiring, cannot be good for you. Thank heaven you are here, my dear child, in a place which, however homely, is intended as a place of training for girls who have to occupy high positions."

"I don't think it will matter for me," said Lucy;

"I shall never be a great lady, I shall only be rich. No one will expect so very much from me."

"They will expect a great deal, and I hope my pupil will do me credit," said Mrs. Stone; and she rose up and kissed Lucy with a little enthusiasm. "I agree with your father, I think there is a great deal in you, Lucy; but I don't agree with him as to the best means of bringing it out. He thinks that you should be plunged into life all of a sudden, and a great call made upon you; but I believe in education; we shall soon see who is right."

"Oh, I hope not," cried Lucy, "I hope not; for before you can know anything about it papa will have to be——"

"Not if he takes my way, Lucy; he ought to take Holmwood, that pretty house near Sir Thomas Randolph's, and give you a beginning; and I think he ought to do some of the things in his will which he is talking of leaving upon you; I will speak to him tomorrow night. Yes, you can say I will come; but do not think too much of these serious matters; go and amuse yourself with your companions, my dear."

"Maria," said Miss Southwood, when the door closed, "you think yourself a great deal wiser than I am, but you must hear what I have to say. If you go and advise that old man to take Holmwood and set up an establishment, there will be but one thing that anybody can think. If you care anything for the opinion of the world, or for my opinion, for heaven's sake don't do it, don't do it! a woman in your position has need to be so careful. Of course, it stands to reason *that* is what everybody will think."

"*What* is what everybody——? Your style in con-

versation is very careless," said Mrs. Stone, with great indifference. But her counsellor would not be put down.

"I will tell you exactly what will be thought," she said, solemnly. "What is the common talk already? that you mean to marry that old man. Why did you take up the girl, risking your whole connection? You that have always been so exclusive—a girl of no family at all! you must have had a motive, no one ever acts without a motive; and, perhaps if he is very rich, and you could be sure of carrying it out—— But how do we know that he is really very rich? and most likely you will not be able to carry it out: and at your age to risk your reputation—oh, I don't mean in any *wrong* way—but to risk your character for sense and good taste, and all that! Consider for one moment, consider, Maria, what the 'parents' would say, what the parents would have a right to say!"

"If you think that I am to be kept in order by a threat of what 'parents' will think!" said Mrs. Stone. "Do you suppose I will ever give in to parents? why, it would be our destruction. But make your mind easy, I don't mean to marry old Trevor, and he does not mean to ask me. Listen! you don't know what you are talking about. That girl whom you think nothing of, that girl you are always taunting me about: and she is a very nice girl, as simple as a daisy and as true—— Listen, Ellen! she will be the Greatest Heiress in England one of these days."

Miss Southwood stood and listened with all her soul, her eyes and her mouth opening wider and wider, her imagination set suddenly on fire, for she had an imagination, and that of a most practical kind. The

greatness of Lucy's fortune had never been so plainly set before her. She was so much taken by surprise that she spoke with a gasp, as if all her breath and energy were thrown into the question.

"And what do you mean to do?"

"I mean to manage her, if I can, for her own good, and for the good of her fellow-creatures," cried Mrs. Stone, excited too. "Power, that is what I have always wanted. I know I can use it well, and Lucy is a good girl, good to the bottom of her heart. She will want to do good with her money: and money, money is power."

Miss Southwood listened, but she did not share her sister's enthusiasm. Her countenance fell into shades of disapproval and impatience. She shook her head.

"You were always so high-flown," she said. "I never saw anything come of these heiresses. Manage her! you ought to know by this time girls are not such easy things to manage. But there is a much better thing you can do, marry her! and that will be good for her and us."

Mrs. Stone looked at her sister with a smile which was somewhat supercilious.

"That is, of course, your first idea; and how, if I may ask, would such an expedient be good for us? if I thought of good for us—which is a thing that never entered my thoughts——"

"Because you have no family affection, Maria. I have always said it of you. You think of the girl more than of your own relations. How is it possible," asked Miss Southwood severely, "that you could have any hand in the disposal of an heiress and not think of Frank?"

CHAPTER VIII.

EXPLANATIONS.

LUCY went home a little impressed by what Mrs. Stone had said. It had never occurred to her before to think of anything but her father's will and pleasure in the matter, or to suppose that she had anything to do but to acquiesce in his arrangements; but when the idea was put into her head, it commended itself to her reasonable mind. If he were, at least, to begin to do some of the things which he had by his will commanded her to do, what an ease and comfort it would be! and she could not but think that it would be a relief to himself, as well as for her, could he be made, as Mrs. Stone suggested, to see it in this way. In the first place, it would obviate on his part all necessity for dying, which, at present, was the initial requirement, the one thing needful, before any of his regulations could be carried out. Why should he die? She could not but perceive, as she thought over the whole subject dispassionately, according to her nature, that from his own point of view it would be a mistake if his life were prolonged. The whole scheme was based upon his death. So long as he did not die it was a mere imagination. And why should this be? far better to get over this fundamental necessity by changing the construction of his plan altogether, and begin to carry out his wishes himself. When they were sitting together in the afternoon, which was wet and dull, the idea took a stronger hold upon her, and it was when Mr. Trevor was actually writing down something new

that had occurred to him, that her thoughts came the length of speech. She looked up from her knitting, and he stopped, with the pen in his hand, and, looking round upon her, listened with a smile to what Lucy might have to say.

"Why should you take all this trouble, papa?" she said suddenly. "I have been thinking; and this is what I feel sure of, that it should all be altered. You are not ill, or likely to die. Instead of writing out all these orders for me, would it not be much better if you would put that paper aside and do the things you have put into it yourself?"

He looked at her over the top of his spectacles with an air of consternation.

"Do the things myself! what things?" he said, then paused and pushed his spectacles up on his forehead, and gazed at her almost fiercely with his small keen eyes. "That paper!" he repeated, "do you mean the will, my will, Lucy?" The tone in which he spoke was as if it had been the British Constitution which Lucy proposed to set aside.

"Yes," she said. "You see, papa, I shall be very young, I shall not have very much sense."

"You have a great deal of sense, Lucy," he said, mollified, "far more than most girls. Providence has made you for the work you have got to do."

"But, papa," she said, "I shall be very young; it will be very hard upon me to decide what is to be done with all that money, and to give and not to give. It will be very hard. How should I know which are the right people? I should either want to give to everybody or to nobody. I should throw it away, or I should be too frightened to make any use of it at all."

"That will be impossible," said old Trevor, with a nod of satisfaction; "I have taken precautions about that."

"Then I should give foolishly, papa."

"Very likely, my dear, very likely; everyone has to pay for his own experience. It is a very dear commodity, Lucy; I can't give you mine, you must get it for yourself, and it has always, always to be paid for. There is no question about that."

"But, papa, would it not be a great deal better—you who have this experience, who have paid for it and got it—instead of living quietly here as if you were nobody, to do it all yourself?"

The old man laughed.

"There, you have hit it, Lucy," he said, "there, you have hit it, my dear. I live quietly, as if I were nobody—and I am nobody—that is exactly the state of affairs."

"But—" she cried, with great surprise and indignation, "if you mean nobody in family, then neither am I; but the money, the money is all yours to do with it whatever you please."

Once more he laughed, and chuckled, and lost his breath, and coughed before he could recover it again; and whether it was the laughing, or the coughing, or something else, Lucy could not tell, but the water stood in his eyes.

"You are mistaken, Lucy, you are mistaken," he said. "You must understand the truth, my dear; neither am I anyone to speak of, nor is the money mine. I have made a little in my life—oh, very little—a poor schoolmaster's earnings, what are they? nothing to make a fuss about. I've put my little savings

away for Jock, you know that. A few thousand pounds, just as much as will give him a start in the world, if it is well taken care of."

"Papa, you ought to give Jock the half," said Lucy, reproachfully, "it is not fair that he should have nothing, and that all should come to me."

"Listen to her!" said the old man, "first telling me to spend it myself, and then to give half to the boy. Nothing of the sort, Lucy; I know what justice is, and I mean to do it. Do you think I could take poor Lucilla's money to make that brat a gentleman? Why, it's a kind of insult to her, poor thing, that he's there at all. I don't say a word against his mother, Lucy, but I always felt I never ought to have married her. I was not like a young man, I was middle-aged even before I married poor Lucilla, and I had no business to have the other; it was a mistake, it was an affront to your poor mother. People say that you show how happy you've been with the first when you get a second, but I don't go in with that. When I think of facing these two women and not knowing which I belong to, I—I don't like it, Lucy. Lucilla was always very considerate, and made great allowances, but there are things a woman can't be expected to put up with, and I don't like the thought."

The humour and half-ludicrous pathos of this explanation, which was made between a laugh and a sob, was lost upon Lucy, who was altogether taken by surprise, and whose sense of humour was but little developed. She gazed at him with her eyes a little more widely opened than usual, not knowing what to say. Had she been a more experienced person, no doubt she would have consoled him with the reflection that

husbands and wives, as we are told, do not stand exactly on the same footing in the next world. But she did not feel capable of saying anything in opposition to this matter-of-fact compunction; it has much in it which commends itself to the unsophisticated. She only gazed at her father, seeing difficulties in the way of his exit from the world which she had never thought of before.

"But that is neither here nor there," he said, with his usual chuckle much subdued. "It is only to explain to you why I won't give anything but my own savings to Jock. I have often told you so before—but now you know the reason why."

Lucy was silent for a time, pondering over all this —then she said in the same serious tone. "But, papa, I don't see that what you have said is any answer to my question. I want to know why you should live here so quietly and save, and leave everything to me to do—when it would be so much better to do it yourself."

"Some one has put this into your head."

"No — only something set me thinking — why shouldn't you, papa? take a great house instead of this; and have carriages and servants, and do all these things —giving and endowing, and building and setting up, that you want me to do—"

The old man laughed with less complication of sentiment than before. "I should make a fine country gentleman," he said, "to sit down and hob and nob with the Earl and Lord Barrington, and Sir John and Sir Thomas. What should I do with grand carriages, that never go outside these four walls—or with menservants when I can't bear the sight of 'em. No, no!

and I shouldn't like it, neither. I can put it all down on paper for you; but I shouldn't like to do it myself. I like to stick to the money, Lucy. I like to lay it up, and see it grow—that's my pleasure in life. It makes me happy when the stocks go up. Interest and compound interest, that's what pleases me."

"But, papa," said Lucy, astonished, "*that* is all quite different," she nodded her head towards the will always lying in the blotting-case within reach of his hand. "There it is all spending and giving; over and over again you say there is to be no hoarding up, no putting by."

"Ah!" said old Trevor, rubbing his hands with enjoyment, "that is for you! that is a different thing altogether. When I've had my own way all my life, down to the last moment, why, then you shall have yours."

"How can you call it mine?" she said, "I don't think I want to have my own way—except in some things. I am very willing to do what you tell me, papa; but it will not be my will—it will be your will. Why then shouldn't you do it yourself, and have the pleasure of it, and not leave it to me?"

"The pleasure of it!" he said. And then paused and cleared his voice, and drew his chair nearer to hers. "Look here, Lucy," he said, "you have heard something about your mother—not very much; but still you have heard something. She was a good woman, a very good woman. She was not of my kind. In the way of money, she let me manage—she never interfered. But still she was not of my kind. She was a woman that had little but trouble in this world, Lucy. She was

what people call an old maid when we married. We were both old maids for that matter," he added, with his usual chuckle, "and she had always had a hard life. She was the old maid of the family; when anything was wrong, she was the one that was sent for. She was the one that nursed them all when they were ill. Father and mother—she closed both their eyes. She never had time to think what was going to become of her. When she came back to Farafield to live with poor Robert, nobody knew he was rich. It was the old story over again. She thought she was coming only to nurse him, and slave for him till he died. Your mother was a good woman—a very good woman, Lucy—"

His voice was a little thick, and the tears sprang into Lucy's eyes.

"Oh! thank you, papa; thank you for telling me," she said.

"That she was," he went on after a little pause, "the best of women. And after we were married she had just as hard a life as ever. She was never well; and all your little brothers and sisters came—and went again. That's very hard upon a woman, Lucy. A baby—who cares much about a baby? it does not seem anything to make a fuss about. There's too many of them in the world; but to have them, and to lose them, is terrible work for a woman. We didn't know about the money at first; and what's money when things are going to the bad in that way? She never got what you may call the good of it. She was one of your giving people. Her hand was never out of her pocket as long as she had a penny in it; but she never rightly got the good of the money. In the first place, we didn't know

about it; and in the second place, why, you know there was me."

"You?" Lucy looked at him with a question in her eyes.

"Yes," said old Trevor with a comical look of half real, half simulated penitence. "I wanted to tell you all this some time, to show you your duty—there was me, Lucy. I told you I was fond of money; and more still, when I wasn't used to it. I clutched it all, and wanted more; and she left it all to me, poor dear. She never even knew how much it was—she let me do whatever I pleased. I didn't even always let her have what she wanted for her poor folks, Lucy," he added ruefully, shaking his head; but there was something about the corner of his mouth which was not repentance. "I was a beast to her—that's just what I was; but, poor thing, she never knew— She thought to the last we couldn't afford any more. She left all the money matters to me."

"She ought to have had her money for the poor, papa."

"Yes, indeed; don't I say so?" a half chuckle of triumph in his own successful craftiness, mingled with the subdued tone appropriate to this confession. "And since she's been dead," he added with a touch of complacency, "I've behaved badly by poor Lucilla. I acknowledge that I have behaved badly; and that is just why I am determined she shall have her revenge—"

"Her revenge!" Lucy looked at him aghast.

"Yes, her revenge; you, Lucy, a girl that shall be brought up a lady, that shall have everything of the best; that shall do as she pleases, and give with both

hands. Ah, Lucilla, poor thing, would have liked that; she would have ruined me with giving," he cried with a momentary tone of complaint, "but you, Lucy, you won't be able to ruin yourself. You will always have plenty, you will be able to cut and come again as people say; isn't that what I have bred you up for since you were a baby? No, no, it isn't I that could do it (and I wouldn't if I could) nor Jock that shall have a penny. It is you that shall be the greatest heiress in England, and do the most for the poor, as Lucilla would have done. Please God she shall have her revenge."

These strange words, which, though they were mixed with so quaint an admixture of comic self-consciousness, had yet passion in them, and an odd kind of idealism and romance, passed over the placid head of Lucy without exciting any feeling but surprise. She was very much astonished. It was impossible to her to understand the vehemence of feeling, generous in its way, though chequered with so much that was not generous, in her father's tone, and she was totally at a loss how to reply. They were alone, and when they were alone the conversation almost always turned on the will, which was not an enlivening subject to Lucy. Certainly the diversion she had made of their mutual thoughts from their ordinary channel had been more amusing; but it had been perplexing too. A little tea-table was set out in the middle of the room, the "massive" silver tea-service which had been one of the few gratifications got by Lucy's mother out of her fortune, shining upon it, in full display for the benefit of Mrs. Stone, who was expected. Mr. Trevor was in a garrulous mood; he had prepared

himself to talk while he waited for his visitor, and Lucy's questions had been all that were wanted to loosen the flood-gates. While she sat opposite to him, wondering, pondering, occasionally looking up at him over her knitting, taking into her mind as best she could the information she had got, but not knowing what to say, he proceeded as if unable to stop himself, with a little gesture of excitement, his hand sawing the air.

"No, she never had much comfort in her life—hard work, sick-nursing and trouble, one dying after another, poor Lucilla; but all *she* didn't have, her girl shall have. She was a governess one while. Always be kind to governesses, Lucy, wherever you see them. Your mother was a real good woman. She would have honoured any station; she had the most unbounded confidence in me, she never asked a word of explanation."

"Papa," said Lucy, glad, in the disturbance of her mind, for any interruption, "I think I hear Mrs. Stone."

"Then go down and meet her," said old Trevor, but he went on with his recapitulation of his wife's virtues. "Never asked a question, was always satisfied whatever I said to her—"

Lucy heard his voice as she went downstairs. She was still wondering, not knowing what to make of it, but self-possessed in that calm of youth which nothing disturbs. It was odd that her father should speak so. He had never been so confidential, or talked of himself so much before; altogether it was strange, tempting her half to laugh, half to cry; but that was all. She went down quite composedly to meet Mrs. Stone, who

was untying her white Shetland shawl from her head in the hall. Lucy saw that Mrs. Ford was peeping from the parlour door at the visitor, with something like a scowl upon her face. Mrs. Ford distrusted and feared the schoolmistress; she thought her capable of marrying old Trevor, notwithstanding his years, and of dissipating Lucy's fortune, and perhaps raising up rivals to little Jock in his sister's affections; for Lucy's affections were all he had to look to, Mrs. Ford was aware, and she thought it was a wicked shame.

"I hope you are better than when I saw you last," Mrs. Stone said, casting a quick glance around her. She knew everything very well by sight in Mr. Trevor's not very comfortable room, the white silky mats, the blue curtains, the little table groaning under that tea-service, which was easy to see weighed as many ounces as a tea-service could be made to weigh. How much more comfortable, she could not but think, the rich old man might have been made; but then he did not know any better, and Lucy did not know any better; they were used to it; they liked this as well as the best. What a blessing for Lucy that as long as she was young enough to be trained she had fallen into good hands! Mrs. Stone took the big easy chair which Lucy rolled forward to the other side of the fire, and sat down after that greeting. She saw more clearly than Lucy did the excitement in old Mr. Trevor's eyes. What was it? An additional glass of wine after dinner, Mrs. Stone thought, a very small matter would be enough to upset an old man sedentary and crippled as old Trevor was.

"Never was better in my life," he said; "that is I am getting old, and my legs are not good for much,

as you know, ma'am; but thank God I have plenty to keep my mind occupied and interested, and that is the great thing, that is the great thing—at my age."

"Always thinking about Lucy," Mrs. Stone said.

"Yes, always about Lucy. She is worth it, ma'am: a girl with her prospects is something worth thinking about. She has all the world before her, she has the ball at her foot."

"Ah, Mr. Trevor, that is what we always think when we are young; everything that is good is going to happen to us, and nothing that is evil. We think we can choose for ourselves, and make our lives for ourselves."

"And so she shall," said old Trevor, "ay, that she shall. I beg your pardon, ma'am, but when I speak of Lucy it isn't merely as a little bit of a girl with her life before her. I think of the place she is to take, and the power she will have in her hands."

"You mean her fortune, Mr. Trevor. Dear child, give me a cup of tea. You think it is not a bad thing to talk so much to her about her fortune?"

"No, ma'am," said the old man, "on the contrary, the very best thing possible. It would be too great a weight for anyone not used to it. You know it fills my mind night and day. I've got to prepare her for it, and put all straight for her as far as I can. There is many a great person that has not the weight on her shoulders that little thing will have, and that is why I sent for you."

"Asked me to come and take tea," said Mrs. Stone, smiling. "No sugar, my dear. Yes, no doubt we have to train her for her future responsibilities. I do it by

trying to make her a good girl, Mr. Trevor, and I think I have succeeded," the lady added, putting her hand affectionately on the girl's shoulder. Lucy, standing between the two, with the cup of tea in one hand and a plateful of cake in the other, looked as completely unexcited by all this talk about her, and as unlike a personage of vast importance, as personages of importance often contrive to do.

"She is a good girl by nature," said her father, somewhat sharply. "I want to tell, Ma'am, of a trust I have appointed you to in my will—along with others," he added hastily, "along with others. I have arranged that in case of Lucy's marriage——"

"Had not you better step downstairs a little, my dear, and just see whether Jane is waiting in the hall?" Mrs. Stone said hurriedly. "Perhaps Mrs. Ford would allow her, as it is so cold, to go downstairs."

"You need not send her away," said old Trevor, grimly, "she knows all about it. I don't want her to be taken by surprise when I die. I want her to know all that is in store for her."

"But about her marriage, my dear Mr. Trevor; at seventeen these ideas come too quickly of themselves."

"I tell you, Ma'am, Lucy is not like common girls," he said testily; "when a woman's in a great position, she has to learn many things that otherwise might be kept from her. What had the Queen to do, I would like to know? Settle all her marriage herself, whatever anyone might think.

"Poor young lady! I used to hear my mother say that her heart bled for her. But you don't compare our Lucy with Her Majesty, Mr. Trevor? Dear Lucy!

though she were the richest girl in England, it would still be a little different from the Queen."

"Madam," said old Trevor, solemnly, "so far as I am aware she *will* be the richest girl in England, and therefore surrounded by dangers; so I've devised a scheme for her safety, and I have put you on the committee. If you will wait a moment till I have got my spectacles I will read it all out to you here."

Mrs. Stone was the third person to whom that wonderful paragraph had been read. She listened with surprise, gradually rising into consternation. When she saw, with the corner of her eye, Lucy coming softly from behind the shelter of the screen, she made an imperative gesture, without looking round, to send her away. The girl obeyed with a smile. Why should she be sent away? she had already heard it all.

She went outside and sat down upon the stair to wait. The draught that swept up the well of the staircase did not affect Lucy; her blood, though it flowed so tranquilly through her veins, was young and kept her warm. She had given up easily the attempt she had made to influence her father, and now she half laughed to herself at the fuss they all made about herself. What were they making such a fuss about? The importance her father attached to all her future proceedings, was to Lucy just about as sensible as Mrs. Stone's precautions for preventing her hearing something she knew perfectly; but she could afford to smile at both.

What did it matter? Lucy felt that everything would go on all the same, that to-day would be as yesterday, and life quite a simple, easy business, whatever they might say.

CHAPTER IX.

A GREAT TEMPTATION.

THE important communication made to her by Mr. Trevor made a great impression upon the mind of Mrs. Stone, but it was an impression of a confusing kind, disturbing all her previous plans and thoughts. It had been her intention, ever since Lucy was placed in her care, to take a decided part in the shaping of the girl's life. Her imagination had been roused by the situation altogether—a young creature, simple, pliable, and unformed, with no relations who had any real right to guide her, and with a great fortune—what might not be made of such a charge! It was not with any covetous inclination to employ her pupil's wealth to her own advantage that Mrs. Stone had determined by every means in her power to acquire an influence over Lucy. She was much too high-minded, too proud, for anything of the sort. No doubt there was an alloy, if not of selfishness, at least of self-regard, in her higher motive, but the worst she would have done would have been to carry out some pet projects of her own by Lucy's help, not to enrich herself. She thought (perhaps), or rather without thinking was aware, that her own importance would be increased by her influence over the heiress; but nothing in the shape of personal aggrandizement was present to her thoughts, even by inference. Mr. Trevor's communication however disturbed her mind in the most uncomfortable way. When you are contemplating a vague influence of a general kind, to be gradually and with

trouble acquired, it is demoralizing to have a definite power suddenly thrust into your hands; and it is hardly possible to refrain from exercising that power, were it but for the sake of the novelty and unexpected character of it, *en attendant* the larger influence to be acquired hereafter. As Mrs. Stone sat in front of Mr. Trevor's fire listening to him, with a ringing in her ears of sudden excitement, holding her cup of tea in her hand, with external calm, yet feeling every pulse flutter, there suddenly appeared before her bewildered eyes, not written on the wall like Belshazzar's warning, but hanging in the air without any material support, like an illuminated scroll, in big luminous letters, the name which her sister had suggested; the name of Frank—FRANK—but bigger, a great deal bigger, than any capitals, dazzling her eyes with the glow in them. Her first feeling was alarm and a kind of horror. It was all she could do to restrain the outcry that rose to her lips. She started so that she spilled her tea, which was hot, so that she started still more; but upon this little accident she put the best face possible.

"It is nothing, my love, nothing," she said, when Lucy hastened to her rescue; "only a little awkwardness on my part, and my old black silk won't hurt." She looked up with a smile in Lucy's face, when lo! the appearance sailed into the air over Lucy's head, and hung there magically, almost touching the girl's fair hair. "How awkward I am," Mrs. Stone cried, looking quite pale and spilling more tea. She thought it was something diabolical, a piece of witchcraft; but it cannot be supposed that it was an easy matter to drive it out of her thoughts. She scarcely knew what

happened afterwards, till she had bidden the Trevors good night and found herself in the muddy bit of road which led to the White House, and got rid, in the darkness, of that startling legend. Was it diabolical, or was it a suggestion from heaven? Perhaps it would have been more near the mark if she had remembered that it was a suggestion from Miss Southwood, which she had crushed with infinite scorn when it was made; but Mrs. Stone did not, or would not, remember this. The night was damp and foggy, and the lights of her own house appeared to her all blurred and hazy, with prismatic haloes round them, like so many sickly moons, and the intermediate bit of road was fitfully lighted by the lantern carried by her maid, which shone in the dark puddles and glistening wet herbage. But Mrs. Stone was scarcely conscious where she was, as she picked her way lightly from one bit of solid path to another; her mind was so full that she might have been in Regent Street, or on a Swiss mountain. Frank! was it a diabolical suggestion, or a revelation from heaven?

All was quiet in the White House when its mistress got in. It was ten o'clock, and the doves were in their nests, which, to be sure, is but an ornamental way of saying that all the girls had gone to bed. The light burned low in the hall, as it burned all night, for Miss Southwood thought light was "a protection" to a lonely house; and the open door of the drawing-room, in which it was the custom of the ladies to sit with their pupils after tea, showing something of the disorderly look of a room deserted for the night, notwithstanding the tidiness with which all the little work-baskets were put out of the way. Beside that open

door, however, was another still shining with firelight and lamplight, where a little supper-tray had just been placed on the table, and a pretty silver cover and crystal decanter, not to speak of a delicate fragrance of cooking, showed that the mistress of the house was pleasantly provided for. No mystery was made of this little supper, which everybody knew was Mrs. Stone's favourite meal; but all the girls had a curiosity about it, and the governesses felt themselves injured that they were not privileged to share its delights. Mrs. Stone, however, stoutly defended her privacy at this hour of repose. She sat down with a sigh of relief, opposite to her sister, who presided at the little white-covered table.

"You are tired," said Miss Southwood, sympathetically, "and that girl has forgotten as usual to put the claret to the fire. But this bird is very well cooked, and the bread-crumbs are brown and crisp, just as you like them. Why was it he sent for you? something quite trifling, I suppose. I wonder how parents can reconcile themselves to the trouble they give."

"It was not a trifle, it was about Lucy's marriage," said the other, "or rather about preventing Lucy's marriage, I think. I am to have a finger in the pie."

"*You!* Old Mr. Trevor is very queer, I know; is he going to take up that odious French system, and arrange it without any reference to the girl? But surely, Maria, you would never countenance an iniquity like that?"

"Iniquity! are you sure it is an iniquity? In some points of view I approve of it greatly. Do you think I

could not choose better husbands for the girls than they will ever choose for themselves? How is a girl to exercise any judgment in the matter? She takes the first man that comes, perhaps, or the first fool she thinks nice-looking, and what is there sacred in that?"

"I thought you were always the one to stand up for love," said Miss Southwood. "I never pretend to know anything about it myself."

"Oh, when there is *love*," said Mrs. Stone, "that is another thing. But what do they know about love? It is fancy, it is not love; how should they know?"

"I am sure *I* can't tell," answered the unmarried sister, very demurely, "don't ask me to give any opinion; you are the one that ought to know; and I have always heard you say, and understood you to uphold——"

"Yes, yes, yes!" cried the other, impatiently; "when a thing has been said once, one is held to it for ever, in this unintelligent way. You never consider how unlike one case is to another, or take the circumstances into account. Besides, all I said referred to a sentiment already formed. I would never tear two young people asunder that were fond of each other, because one was rich and the other poor; that is a thing I could never be guilty of. But this is a very different matter. To take care that a girl like Lucy Trevor does not make a foolish choice, or even," said Mrs. Stone, with a certain solemnity and deliberateness of utterance, "to direct her thoughts to some one eminently suitable—"

Miss Southwood looked at her with eager eyes. After the manner in which her suggestion had been

received at their former interview, she did not venture to repeat it; but she knew by experience that a suggestion is sometimes very badly received to-day, and accepted as a matter of course, or even energetically acted upon, to-morrow; so she said nothing, but with eager, though concealed, scrutiny, watched her sister's looks. Finding, however, that Mrs. Stone said nothing more, but pensively eat her chicken, she resumed after a while her inquiries.

"I suppose Mr. Trevor has been consulting you," she said, "and I am sure it was the very best thing he could do. But, after all, Lucy is only seventeen, poor little thing! and a good girl, with no nonsense about her. Does he want to marry her off so young, the poor child?"

"I think," said Mrs. Stone, reflectively, turning her chair to the fire, "he does not want her to marry at all."

"Oh!" cried Miss Southwood in dismay. She had not married herself: she professed at once, when the subject was mentioned, her entire incompetence to give any opinion; but the idea that a girl's friends should wish her *not* to marry filled her mind with an amazement beyond words. The *naïveté* of her conviction on this point betrayed itself in her unfeigned wonder. She could not believe it. "I suppose," she said, "that he wants to keep the money in the family; and that means that he will marry her to her cousin, that young man, that Mr. Rainy."

"Her cousin! you mean the certificated schoolmaster, the Dissenter."

"Oh, he is not a Dissenter; we met him at the

Rectory; he is a very rising young man, and clever, and——"

"You may save yourself the trouble of enumerating his good qualities. I can't tell how you know them; but Lucy shall never marry the schoolmaster, I will refuse my consent."

"You will refuse your consent? and what will that matter?" Miss Southwood said.

Mrs. Stone made no particular answer. She put her feet upon the comfortable velvet cushion before the fire, and smiled. She did not care to enter upon explanations, but she had made up her mind. The fire was bright, the bird had been good, and her modest glass of claret was excellent. She was altogether in a balmy humour, willing to enjoy the many comforts of her life, and to feel benevolently towards her neighbour.

"I think you are right," she said, "and perhaps I am prejudiced. He is a rising young man. We have met him two or three times at the Rectory, so he cannot be a Dissenter; but he is not a gentleman either. How should he be, being one of those Rainys? I shouldn't wonder if it was to keep him out."

"If what was to keep him out?"

"By the way," said Mrs. Stone, "I have a letter to write. Don't let me keep you out of bed, Ellen. I am very much behind in family correspondence. Have any of the St. Clairs ever been at the White House since we came here? I can't recollect."

"Not one," said Miss Southwood, with a beating heart. "Not one! and I have often thought, Maria, considering all things, and that they have no father,

poor things, and are not very well off—and so nice, both sisters and brothers——"

"One does not want so many arguments. Frank may come and pay us a visit if he likes," said Mrs. Stone with much amiability. But it was not till the morning, when she came down first, as she always did, and put the letter, which had been left on Mrs. Stone's private writing-table, ready for the early post, in the letter-bag, that Miss Southwood had the satisfaction of seeing that it was addressed to the favourite nephew, whose name she had not ventured to pronounce for a second time. Mrs. Stone had not been inattentive to the vision, the intimation, whether from heaven or the other place. He was to come and try his fortune in those lists.

Miss Southwood went about her occupations all day as if she trod on air; but she kept her lips tightly shut, and never asked a question. She was discretion itself. As for Mrs. Stone, after she had done it, many doubts suggested themselves. It was not for nothing, not by mere vice of temperament that she obeyed her own impulses so readily. Like all impulsive people, she was subject to cold fits as well as hot; but like many other impulsive people, she had learned that it was her best policy to obey the first imperious movement of nature. The thing was done, at all events, before the struggle of judgment began. And the answer she made to her own objections was a mysterious one. "Why not I, as well as Lady Randolph," was what she said to herself.

CHAPTER X.

CHATTER.

"Do you know," said Katie Russell, "there is a gentleman in the house? None of us have seen him; but he came yesterday. He is young, and tall, and nice-looking. He is their nephew. Mademoiselle says it is quite improper. Of course, she oughtn't to say so; and the girls don't know what to think: for you know it is queer."

"Why is it queer?" said Lucy. "If he is their nephew, he may surely come to see them. If they had a son, he would live here."

"I don't think so," said Katie promptly. "Oh no! if they had a dozen sons, not while the girls are here. It would never do. I have been at other schools, and I know. I have spent my life at schools, I think," the girl said with an impatient shrug of her shoulders, "and I know Mademoiselle is quite right, though she oughtn't to say so. I wonder, Lucy, if I will be as governessy when I am old? They almost always are."

Lucy could not follow this quick digression. She gazed at her friend with wondering eyes. "You always jump so," she said. "Which am I to answer—about the gentleman, or about—"

"Oh! never mind the gentleman. I only told you —it can't matter very much to me," said Katie. "It is for Maud and Lily, and girls of that set that it is not right, or you—Is it true that you are to have a great fortune, Lucy? I always wanted to ask you—but I did not like—"

"Yes, I believe so," said Lucy quietly, "why shouldn't you like? Papa takes a great deal of trouble about it; but it does not matter so much to me. One is just the same one's self, whether one is rich or poor; it will give a great deal of trouble. So I don't care for it for my part."

"Oh! I should care for it," cried Katie. "I should not mind the trouble. How delightful it must be to be really, really rich! I should give—I should do—oh I don't know what I shouldn't do! The use of being rich," Katie added sententiously, "is that you can do as you please—go where you please, be as kind to everybody as you please; help people, enjoy yourself, buy everything you like, and yet always have something. Oh!" she said, clasping her hands, "to have to think and think whether you can buy yourself a pair of gloves—not to be able to get a cab when your mother is tired; and to grow old, and to grow governessy like Mademoiselle—"

"Mademoiselle is very nice, Katie. Don't say anything against her."

"*I* say anything against her! I adore her! but she is governessy, how can she help it, poor old darling? Her mind is full of the girls' little ways, and what they mean by this and by that, Lucy," said the girl stopping short to give greater emphasis to her words. "If we ever see each other when I am an old governess like Mademoiselle—be sure you remember to tell me when you see me worrying, that the girls mean *nothing* by it—*nothing!* This is the 21st of February. It is my birthday—I am nineteen. Tell me to recollect that I said they meant nothing—and that it's true."

"Are you really nineteen to-day?" said Lucy. "Older than I—"

"More than a year older. I wonder," said Katie with that patronage and superiority which the poor often show to the rich, "whether, when you are fifty, you will know as much of the world as I do now?"

Lucy's companion was the governess-pupil, the one among the band of girls whose society her father had counselled her not to seek. Perhaps there was something of the perversity of youth in the preference which, notwithstanding this advice, Lucy felt for the girl whose friendship old Mr. Trevor had decided could be of no use whatever to her. Lucy was not nearly so clever as Katie Russell, who was already a great help in the school, and earning the lessons which she shared with the more advanced pupils. But Lucy was by no means so sure of her inferiority in point of experience as her companion was. She knew, if not the expedients of poverty, yet of economy through Mrs. Ford's example, and she knew many details of a lower level of existence, lower than anything Katie was acquainted with; and even the shadow of her own future power which had lain upon her from her childhood had stood in the stead of knowledge to Lucy, teaching her many things; but she was a quiet person, thinking much more than she spoke; and she made no reply to this imputation of ignorance, though she thought it a mistake. She replied with a little closer pressure of her friend's arm. "Why are you so sure of being an old governess? You will marry—most likely the first of all of us."

"Oh! no, no, don't you know there are a million more women in England than men? It is in all the

papers. Some of us will marry, you, for instance; but there must be a proportion—say five out of twenty, that's not much," said Katie, knitting her soft brows, "who never will; and I shall be one of them. For fun," she said, throwing gravity to the winds, "let us guess who the other four will be."

"Me," said Lucy with a gentle composure and indifference alike to matrimony and to grammar. "I think that is what papa would like best—"

"That is absurd," said Katie, "you! you will have a hundred proposals before you are out a year. You will be the very first."

"Put me down, however," Lucy repeated. "It will be rather a good thing to be kept from getting married, if it is as you say. It will help to set the balance straight. There will be my gentleman for one of you."

"You do not mean that you are to be *kept* from marrying," Katie cried aghast. This made a still greater impression on her mind than it had done on Miss Southwood's, and it suggested to her a sudden chivalrous idea of rescue. Katie too had a Frank, a cousin, between whom and herself there had existed from the earliest times a baby tenderness. If ever she was married, Katie had tacitly concluded that he would be "the gentleman." They might set up a school together; they might work together in various ways. It was a vague probability, yet one in which most of the light of Katie's future lay. But suddenly it flashed upon her, all in a moment, what a chance, what an opening was this for any man. Frank was poor; they were all poor; but if he could be persuaded

to step in and save Lucy from the celibacy to which she seemed to think herself condemned, Frank's fortune would be made. It was the basest calculation in the world; and yet nothing could have been more innocent—nay generous. It blanched Katie's cheeks for the moment; but filled her mind with a whirl of thoughts. What a thing it would be for him and all the family! If the dream should come to pass, Katie felt that she herself might give in at once, and make up her mind to grow old and governessy like Mademoiselle; but what did that matter, she asked herself heroically. For a second, indeed, she paused to think whether her brother, Bertie, might not answer the purpose without costing herself so much; but anticipated sacrifice is the purest delight of misery at nineteen, and she rather preferred to think that this great advantage to her cousin and her friend would be purchased at the cost of her happiness. And Frank himself might not like the idea at first; her great consolation was that it was almost certain Frank would not like it. But he must learn to subdue his inclinations, she thought proudly—would not she do so for his sake? If *other people* were content to make that sacrifice, why should not he? And what a difference it would make, if a stream of comfort—of money and all that money can buy, ease of mind and freedom from debt, and power to do what one would—came suddenly pouring in to the family, setting everything right that was wrong, and smoothing away all difficulties! To despise money is a fine thing; but how few can do it! Katie did not despise it all. She forgot her companion while she walked on dreamily by her side, thinking of her fortune. Mer-

cenary little wretch the moralist would say; and yet she was not mercenary at all.

The girls were walking across the Common by themselves. It was part of Mrs. Stone's enlightened system that she allowed them to do so, in cases where the parents did not interfere. And so far as these two were concerned, even the consent of the parents was unnecessary; for was not Katie Russell, though only eighteen, a governess in the bud? and, accordingly, quite capable of acting as chaperon when necessary. Poor little Katie! this was one of the mild indignities of her lot that she felt most. Her lot was not at all a bad one at Mrs. Stone's, where the head of the establishment backed her up quietly as indeed the one of her inmates with whom she was most in sympathy—and when the girls were "nice." Girls are not all "nice," any more than are any other class of the community, and Katie had known what it was to be snubbed and scorned, and even insulted. But happily this was not the fashion at the White House. Still one mark of her inferior position remained in the fact that Katie, though so young, and one of the prettiest of the band, was, being half a governess, qualified to accompany her peers in the character of chaperon. It was not quite clear that she might not be at that moment taking care of Lucy, who was less than a year her junior; but happily this idea had not crossed her mind. It was Sunday, which was a day of great freedom at the White House—a day given over (after due attention to all religious duties, need it be said? for Mrs. Stone knew what was expected of her, and you may be sure took all her doves to church with the most undeviating regularity) to confidences,

to talks, to letter-writings. Some of the girls were covering sheets of note-paper with the most intimate revelations, some were chattering in corners, some reading story-books. Story-books are not necessarily novels—Mrs. Stone made a clever distinction. There was nothing in three volumes upon her purified and dignified shelves; but a book in one volume had a very good chance of coming within her tolerant reading of the word Story. And some were out, perambulating about the garden, where the first crocuses were beginning to bloom, or crossing the Common by those devious little paths half hidden in heather and all kinds of wild plants which were bad for boots and dresses—but very pleasant otherwise. It was along one of these that Lucy Trevor and her companion were wandering. The mossy turf was very green, betraying the moisture beneath; and the great bushes of heather, with all the withered bloom stiffened upon them, stood up like mimic forests from the treacherous grass. Wild bushes of gorse, with here and there a solitary speck of yellow, a premature bud upon them interspersed their larger growth here and there. The frost had all melted away. In the little marshy pools, the water was clear and caught glimpses of a sky faintly blue. One willow on the very verge of the Common had hung out its tassels, those prophecies of coming life.

There was a scent of Spring in the air. "In the Spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to—" love, the poet says; and so, perhaps, does a girl's. But before either are warmly awakened to that interest, Spring touches them thrilling with a profusion of thought and planning and anticipation, not so distinct

as love. The young creatures feel the sap of life mounting within them. Oft-times they know nothing more, and have formed no definite idea either of what they want, or why; but their minds are running over with a flood of living. Their plans go lightly skimming through the air, now poising a moment on a branch, and again flashing widely on devious wing to all the points of the compass like so many birds. There was no immediate change necessary in the placid course of their school-girl existence; but they leapt forward to meet the future with all the force of their energies. Yet, perhaps, it was only one of them who did this. Lucy was too calm in the certainty of the changes that sooner or later would happen to her —changes already mapped out and arranged for her, as she was well aware—to be able to give herself up to these indefinite pleasures of imagination. But Katie leaped at her future with the fervour of a fresh imagination. She made up her mind to sacrifice herself, and give Lucy her cousin in less time than many would take to decide whether they should give up a ribbon. She sank into silence for a little time while she was pondering it, but never from any indecision; only because in her rapid foresight of all that was necessary, she did not quite see how the first step—the introduction of these two to each other was to be brought about.

Just then the girls became aware of two other figures, bearing down upon them from the other side of the Common—two larger personages making their slight youth look what it was, something not much more than childish. There was Mrs. Stone and the unknown gentleman who had arrived at the White

House, to the scandal of the old governess, last night. When the girls perceived this, they mutually gave each other's arms a warning pressure. "Oh, look, here he is!" said Katie, and, "Is that the gentleman?" Lucy said. The encounter brought to the former a quick flush of excitement. She wondered a little, on her own account, who the gentleman was; for an apparition of such an unusual description in a girl's school had naturally excited all the inmates. A man under Mrs. Stone's roof! Men were common enough things at home, and aroused no feelings of curiosity or alarm. But here it was quite different. Whence came he, and what had he come for? But besides this, there was another source of interest in Katie's thoughts. As she conceived her own plot, a glimmering sense of the other came upon her by instinct. Why had this wonderful occurrence, this arrival of a gentleman, happened at Mrs. Stone's? Mrs. Stone knew all about Lucy's fortune, and the wicked scheme invented by her father (of which Katie knew nothing except by lively guesses) to keep her unmarried. And straightway the gentleman had come! She watched him anxiously as he approached. He was like Mrs. Stone, and he was not unlike the smiling and gracious face in a hairdresser's window, complacent in waxwork satisfaction. He was large, tall, with fine black hair, whiskers and moustache, and a good complexion. He had something of that air of self-display—not vanity or conceit, but simply expansion and spreading out of himself which is characteristic of large men used to the company of many women. Katie pressed her friend's arm more and more closely as they approached.

"What do you think of him?" she said. "I wonder if they will speak to us. Will Mrs. Stone introduce us? If she does, I know what I shall think."

"What shall you think?" said Lucy, across whose mind no glimmering of the cause of this unusual visit had flown. She watched him coming very placidly. "Mrs. Stone will not stop. She never does when she has any stranger with her. Who is it, Katie? I never heard that they had any brother."

"It is their nephew," Katie said, with something of that knowledge which is what she herself called governessy, that minute acquaintance with all details of a family which people in any kind of dependence are so apt to attain. Mademoiselle was her authority, Mademoiselle, who, though she was "nice," had yet the foibles of her position, and a certain jealous interest, not altogether unkind, yet too curious to be entirely benévolent, about all her employer's works and ways. "He was brought up for the Church, but he has not gone into the Church. Doesn't he look like a parson? When a man has been brought up in that way, he never gets the better of it. He always looks like a spoilt clergyman."

"I don't think he looks like a clergyman at all," said Lucy, "nor spoilt either."

"Oh, you admire him! I ought to have known you are just the kind of girl to like a barber's block man. Our Frank," said Katie, with some vehemence, "is not so big—he has not half such a shirt-front; but I am sure he has more strength. You should see him throwing things. He won two cups for that—and one for running," she added with a sigh. She already felt something of the pang with which these cherished cups

would be put, with their owner, into another's possession. In imagination, she had sometimes seen them arranged on a humble side-board in a little house, with which she herself, Katie, had the closest connection. But that was the merest dream, and not to be considered for a moment when the interest of the one and the happiness of the other were concerned.

"Frank! who is Frank?" said Lucy, "you never told me of him before."

"Oh! Frank is my cousin. There never was any occasion," said Katie, with a slightly querulous tone, which Lucy did not understand. She looked with a little wonder at her friend, then set down her perturbation to the score of Mrs. Stone, who was now very near. The girls withdrew from each other to make room, leaving the narrow path clear between. Mrs. Stone answered this courtesy by stepping forward in front of the gentleman with a gracious smile upon her face.

"Where are you going?" she said. "I think, my dear children, it is going to rain. You must soon turn back; and the Common is very wet. After you have got back and changed your boots come to my room to tea." And then she passed on with little amical nods and smiles. The gentleman was not introduced to them, but he took off his hat as he followed behind Mrs. Stone, a courtesy which is always agreeable to girls who have only lately ceased to be little girls, and come within the range of dignified salutations. Even Lucy's tranquil soul owned a faint flutter of pleasure. It was a distinct honour too to be asked to Mrs. Stone's room to tea, and to know that they were to be introduced into the society of the "gentleman" added a little additional excitement. They walked only a very

little way further, mindful at once of the advice and the invitation.

"I wonder if any of the others will be there," said Katie. She was somewhat elated although she was suspicious, and in a state of half resistance to Mrs. Stone and the rival Frank, whose rivalry the little schemer felt by instinct. As for Lucy, the object of all this plotting, she suspected nothing. She even felt a little guilty in the pleasure to which she looked forward. To be asked to Mrs. Stone's room to tea on Sunday evening was a distinction of which all the girls were proud. It was like an invitation from the Queen, a command which was not to be disregarded; but yet she had a little uneasiness in her mind, thinking of her little brother, who would be disappointed. Even for Mrs. Stone, the sovereign of this small world, she did not like to break faith with little Jock.

CHAPTER XI.

AN AFTERNOON TEA.

MRS. STONE'S room was fitted up in the latest, which I need not say is far from being the newest fashion. It would indeed have been an insult to her to say that anything in it was new. Mr. Morris had only just begun to reign over the homes of the æsthetic classes; but Mrs. Stone was well in advance of her age, and her walls were covered with a very large pattern of acanthus leaves in several shades of green, with curtains as nearly as possible the same in design

and colour. She had a number of plates hung about the walls instead of pictures, and here and there gleaming shelves and little cabinets full of china, which were a great relief and comfort to the eye. Her chairs were Chippendale, need it be said? and held her visitors upright in a dignified height and security. The room had but one window, which was large, but half filled with designs in glass, and half overshadowed by a great lime-tree, which was delightful in summer, but in February not so delightful. The fire was at the end of the room, and the room was somewhat dark, especially in the afternoon. When the two girls went in, several persons were dimly visible seated in those large and solemn Chippendalian chairs, with hands reposing upon the arms of them, ranged against the walls like Egyptian gods. The colour of one of these figures, though faint in the gloom, was that of Miss Southwood's grey velveteen, her ordinary afternoon dress, and therefore recognisable; but the others in masculine black clothes, with only a vague whiteness for their faces, were mysterious as Isis and Osiris; and so was a lady with her veil over her face, who sat at the other side of the fire-place, with the air of a chairwoman at a meeting, high and stately—though she caught a little of the pale afternoon daylight upon her, yet her dark dress and sealskin coat and veil prevented any distinctness of revelation. In this correct and carefully arranged parlour there was one weak point. A woman who is without caprice is unworthy of being called a woman. Instead of herself occupying a Chippendale chair, and having her tea-tray placed upon the tall, slender-limbed Queen Anne table, which stood in readiness against the wall, Mrs. Stone chose

to make herself the one anachronism in the place. Her chair was a low one in front of the fire; her tea-table was in proportion—a bit of debased nineteenth century comfort in the midst of the stately grace which she professed to think so much more delightful. Why was this? It was Mrs. Stone's pleasure, and there was no more to be said. She, with her pretty white cap upon her handsome head, seated at the feet of all her silent guests in their high chairs, was not only the central light in the picture, but a kind of humorous commentary upon it; but whether this proceeded from any sense of the joke in her, or was merely the expression of her own determination to please herself, were it even in flat rebellion to her own code, no one could tell.

"You are just in time," she said, "Lucy and Katie, to give our friends some tea. Don't interfere, Frank. I like girls to hand tea. It comes within their province; and it is a pretty office, which they do far more prettily than you can."

"That I don't dispute for a moment," said a large round manly baritone, enthroned on high in one of the Chippendale chairs, "and I don't deny that I like to be served by such hands when it is permitted."

"That is one of the popular fallacies about women," said Mrs. Stone, "and involves the whole question. Our weak surrender of our rights for the pleasure of being waited upon in public, was I suppose one of the consequences of chivalry. According to my theory, it is the business of women to serve. You shoot the birds or kill the deer, Mr. Rushton, as you best can, and we cook it and carve it, and serve it up to you."

"If this beatitude depends upon my ability to kill

the deer or shoot the birds, my dear lady!" said another good-natured voice: which added immediately, "Why, this is Lucy Trevor! I am very glad to see you. My dear, this is Lucy Trevor. Since she has been at the White House we have scarcely seen her. You girls are made too happy when you get under the charge of Mrs. Stone."

"Is it you, Lucy?" said the lady with the veil; "come and speak to me, dear. I think it is a year since I have seen you. You have grown up, quite grown up in the time. How these young creatures change! A year does not make much difference in us —but this child has shot up! And Raymond—you remember your playfellow, Lucy—why, he is a man, as old as his father, giving us advice, if you please! It is something wonderful. I catch myself laughing out when I hear him discoursing about law. Raymond giving his opinion, my little boy, my baby! And I daresay little Lucy has begun to give her opinion too."

"Lucy is a very good girl," said Mrs. Stone, "she never takes anything upon her. Katie now and then favours us with her ideas as to how the world should be governed."

"That is right," said Mr. Rushton, from the darker side. "I like to know what the young people think. It is they who will have it all in their hands one day."

"But thank heaven they will have changed their minds before that time."

This was from Miss Southwood, who emphasised her exclamation by getting up to sweep off into the fire-place a few crumbs from her grey velveteen gown.

"Do you think it is a good thing they should have

changed their minds? It seems to me rather a pity. That is why we never have anything new. We all fall into the same jog-trot about the same age."

"The new is always to be avoided. Don't tell me about jog-trot—I wish I were half as sensible as my mother."

"And so do I, Ellen," said Mrs. Stone, taking up the discussion in her own manner with that soft little half blow to begin with. Nobody could tell whether it was directed at her sister, or was an echo of her wish, not even Lucy, who knew her so well, and who stood between her and Mrs. Rushton listening to their talk, but without any impulse on her own part to rush into it as Katie would have done. Katie in the meantime had got out of that graver circle. She had given the large baritone his cup of tea, and now was holding the cake-basket while he selected a piece. Katie was in the light, so much light as there was. She was a fair-haired girl, with just the touch of warmth and colour that Lucy wanted—a little gold in her hair, a deeper blue in her eyes, a tinge of rose on her cheeks: and she had a far warmer sense of fun than Lucy, who would have carried the cake-basket quite demurely without any smile.

"I hope you will not think this is my fault," Mrs. Stone's nephew said in a low tone. "I am bound to obey, as I suppose everyone is here; otherwise I should not sit still and allow myself to be served; it is not my way, I assure you. And I keep you standing so long. I cannot make up my mind which piece to take. This has the most plums, but that is the larger piece. It always turns out so in this life; I wonder if

you have found that out in your experience, or if things are better managed here."

"We are not supposed to have any experience at school," said Katie demurely. It was pretty to see her holding the cake-basket. And the rest of the company was occupied with their own conversation. Besides, how was he to know which of them was the heiress?

"We met you on the Common just now with your friend. It is not a very amusing walk, but it is better than going out in procession, I suppose. Does my aunt make you do that? is it part of a young lady's education, as cricket is of a man's?"

"Yes," said Katie. "We are trained to put up with everything that is disagreeable, just as boys are trained to everything that is pleasant."

"Do you think cricket then so pleasant?"

"Not to me—but I suppose it is to boys; and boating and everything of the kind. On our side we are taught quite differently. If there is anything more tiresome than another, more tedious, less likely to please us, that is what we are made to do."

"My poor aunt! is she a tyrant then with her pupils? She is not a tyrant for her relations; or at least a very charming, delightful tyrant."

"I did not mean Mrs. Stone; she is very kind—even to me; but I have been at other schools. I suppose it is for our good," said Katie with a sigh, "everything that is very disagreeable is for our good; though I wonder sometimes why the boys should not have a little trial of the same—for I suppose they too have got to put up with things that are disagreeable in their life."

"We are supposed," said the baritone, who was becoming quite visible to her, enthroned in his Chippendale chair, "to have most of the disagreeables of life, while you ladies 'who dwell at home at ease'——"

"Ah!" cried Katie, setting down the cake-basket, "if you would but quote correctly. The man who wrote the song knew a great deal better. It is the gentlemen who live at home at ease. 'To all you ladies now on land,' is what he says; he knew better. We don't go out to sea like him, but we go through just as much on land, you may be sure," cried the girl, with a sudden flush coming over her face; "it was not to us he said, 'How little do you think upon the dangers of the seas.' I have got a little brother a sailor," she added half under her breath.

"I have evidently chosen my illustration badly," said the other with prompt good-humour and a sympathetic tone. "If you have a little brother, I have a big one at sea, so here is something to fraternize upon. Mine is the captain of a big merchantman, an old salt, and does not mind the dangers of the sea."

"Ah, but mine is a little middy," said Katie, with a smile in her eyes and a tear trembling behind it, "he minds a great deal. He does not like it at all. And mamma and I feel the wind go through and through us whenever it blows."

"I see," said the gentleman, "these are the disagreeables of life you speak of—imaginary. Probably when he is in a gale you know nothing about it, and the winds that make you tremble have nothing to do with him; but these are very different, you must acknowledge, from real troubles."

Katie did not condescend to answer this speech. She gave him a look only, but that spoke volumes. The superiority of experience in it was beyond words. How could he know, a man, well dressed, and well off apparently, with a heavy gold chain to his watch, and handsome studs, how could he know one tithe of the troubles that had come her way in that poverty which only those who know it can fathom? She withdrew behind the tea-table, just as Mrs. Stone called to her nephew,

"Frank," she said. ("So he is Frank *too*," said Katie to herself.) "I have not presented you to my young friends. Mr. Frank St. Clair, Miss Russell (I see you have made acquaintance already); and Miss Trevor. Lucy, do you remember I once told you of a boy who was to me what your little Jock is to you? There he stands," for Frank had risen to bow to his new acquaintance, and stood with his back to the window, shutting out what little light there was.

"You were a very young aunt, certainly," he said, "but I refuse to believe that Miss Trevor has anything to do with a second generation."

"Youth does not matter in that respect," said Mrs. Rushton. "I was an aunt when I was three. There are a great many younger aunts than Lucy; but, as it happens, it is a little brother we are thinking of. And *àpropos*, my dear, how *is* little Jock? has he gone to school? it must be time he were at school."

"When you are ready, Lucy," said Mr. Rushton, "I am going with you to see your father. Not to say a word against my good old friend Trevor, he is full of whims. Now what is his fancy about that child? He

will not bring him up as you have been brought up, Lucy."

"Because he has nothing to do with the money," said Lucy simply. "Papa thinks that a very good reason. I wish you would persuade him, Mr. Rushton; I can't."

"And he tells you so!" said Mrs. Rushton, shaking her head, "he talks to you about your money, Lucy?"

"Oh, yes! a great deal," said Lucy. She spoke with perfect calm and composure, and they all looked at her with subdued admiration. Six pair of eyes thus turned to her in the partial gloom. An heiress! and not ashamed of it, nor excited by it—taking it so calmly. Sighs that were all but prayers burst from, at least, three bosoms. Oh, that she but knew my Raymond! thought one; and, if Frank will but play his cards as he ought! breathed another; while Mr. St. Clair himself said within himself robustly and without any disguise—I wish I had it! There was no sentiment in the latter aspiration. Katie, for her part, looked across the tea-table at her friend with one of her sudden blushes, feeling her cheeks tingle. What were her feelings in respect to Lucy? In her case, the wonder and interest were dashed with contempt, yet warmed by affection. Katie thought she despised money—not the abuse of it, nor the pride of it—but itself. Her soft little lip curled (or, at least, she tried to make it curl) with disdain at this meretricious advantage. She had said a hundred times that Lucy would be a very nice girl, the nicest girl in the school, if it were not for that money. She looked at her with a kind of angry love—half disposed to cry out, in Lucy's defence, that she was far better than her fortune; and half to

throw a gibe at her because she was rich. If they had been alone, she would have done the latter. As it was, amid this party of people, with Mrs. Stone close by, and Miss Southwood's little dark eyes twinkling at her out of the shadows, Katie was prudent and said nothing at all. As for Lucy, she did not in the least perceive the covetousness, which—in some instances, so mingled with other feelings that its baseness was scarcely visible—flamed in the eyes of the irreproachable people who surrounded her. Mrs. Rushton was a kind, good woman, who would not have harmed a fly. Mrs. Stone was better even, she was high-minded, generous in her way. And yet they both devoured Lucy in their thoughts—gave her over to the destroyer. How fortunate that she never suspected them as she stood there tranquilly between the two, acknowledging that she knew a great deal about her money. Mrs. Rushton was still shaking her head at that avowal.

"My dear," she was saying, and with perfect sincerity, "you must not let it turn your head. Money can do a great deal, but there are many things it cannot do. It cannot make you happy—or good."

"Lucy is good in spite of it," Mrs. Stone said, she too in all sincerity; "and I don't think she lets her mind dwell upon it. But it is a very equivocal advantage for a girl," she added with a sigh.

All this Frank St. Clair listened to with a grin upon his good-looking countenance. What humbugs! he said to himself—not being capable of understanding that these women were much more interesting as well as more dangerous in not being humbugs at all. He, for his part, waited for an opportunity of making himself agreeable to the little heiress in perfect good

faith—*brutalement* as the French say. He wanted to please her frankly for her fortune's sake. Not that he could have been unkind to her, had he happened to strike her fancy, or would waste her fortune, or do anything unbecoming an honest Englishman. But an honest Englishman, with a light purse, may surely look after a girl with money without compromising his character. When he asked her to marry him, he would not let her see that her money had anything to do with it. He would fall in love with her as a matter of course. It is not difficult to fall in love with a pretty young girl of seventeen. Well, perhaps, not strictly pretty—not nearly so pretty, for example, as that little Poverty by her side, the foil to her wealth; but still very presentable, and not unattractive in her own simple person. Thus the cautious eyes that surrounded Lucy, the hearts that beat with eagerness to entrap and seize her, did not recognise themselves as inflamed by evil passions. They were aware, perhaps, that a little casuistry would be necessary to make the outer world aware of the innocence of their intentions, but there was no aspect of the case in which they could not prove that innocence to themselves.

When the hour of tea was over, Mr. Rushton walked home with Lucy to see his old friend. John Trevor was not Mr. Rushton's equal, nor did he treat him as such. The old schoolmaster had taught him arithmetic, that neglected branch of education, thirty or forty years ago, before he went to the public school, where it was not taught; and the prosperous lawyer, who was Town-clerk, and one of the principal men in Farafield, had always shown a great regard for his old master. "I should never have known more than two times two but

for you, Trevor," he would say, patting the old man on the shoulder, not very respectful, yet with genuine kindness. He went into the blue and white drawing-room, and seated himself in front of the fire, and talked for an hour to old Trevor, liberating Lucy, who hurried away to Mrs. Ford's parlour, and with enviable confidence in her digestion had another cup of tea to please Jock, who had been watching for her eagerly from the window. Then she was made to sit down in a creaking basket-work chair beside the fire and tell him stories. Mrs. Ford's parlour was not æsthetic, like that of Mrs. Stone; but its horsehair and mahogany furniture produced an effect not much unlike. Mrs. Ford, in a black arm-chair, was elevated as high above the heads of the younger people as if she had been seated in a genuine Chippendale chair. And she crossed her hands on her black silk apron, and sitting back in the shadow, listened well pleased, but half in a drowse of comfort to Lucy's stories. She had a little rest in her own person when Lucy stepped into the breach. Though Mrs. Ford was not at all certain that Lucy's stories were Sunday stories worthy of the name.

Old Trevor had the will spread out before him when Mr. Rushton entered—not adding to it, however, which he would have certainly disapproved of as improper Sunday work—but reading it over, sometimes aloud, sometimes under his breath, sometimes with mutterings of criticism. He pushed it away as his visitor entered, and rose tottering to welcome him.

"Always going on with it, always going on with it," the new-comer said, shaking his hand.

"Yes, I always go on with it," cried old Trevor with a chuckle, "It's my *magnum opus*, Mr. Rushton.

I add a bit most days, and on Sunday I read over my handiwork, and study how I can mend it. I have put you in," he added with a great many nods of his head.

"What, for a legacy, Trevor?" said Mr. Rushton with an easy laugh.

"For a legacy if you like," said old Trevor, "though I don't suppose a hundred pounds would be much to you. No, not for money; but for the care of my girl, who is money. Ford downstairs is always dinning into my ears that somebody will marry her for her fortune. I hope Lucy has more sense; but still, in case of anything happening, I want her to have friends to advise her."

"Oh, I will advise her," said Mr. Rushton lightly, "though I think perhaps my wife would do it better. Fortune-hunters, yes, there are always fortune-hunters after an heiress. Your best plan would be to choose some one for her yourself, and get her married off in your lifetime, Trevor. Lucy is a good girl, and would content herself with her father's choice."

"Do you think so?" said the old man with a gleam of pleasure, "but no, no," he added, "I am not in the same world that Lucy will be in. I couldn't choose for her; and besides she's only seventeen, and I'm not long for this world."

"Seventeen is not too young to be married; and you're hale and hearty, my old friend," said his visitor, once more slapping him on the shoulder. This demonstration of friendliness was almost too much for old Trevor, standing up feebly on his trembling old legs in honour of this distinguished acquaintance. He shook his head, but the voice was shaken out of him,

and he was not capable of any further reply. When, however, Mr. Rushton encountered Ford outside at the gateway of the Terrace he took a much less jovial tone. "I hope he has got everything signed and sealed," he said, "and all his affairs in order; these papers he is always pottering over—codicils I suppose—you should get them signed too and made an end of. He is not long for this world, as he himself says."

"I don't see much difference," said Ford with that eagerness, half sorrow for the impending event, half impatience to have it over, which even the most affectionate of friends often feel in spite of themselves, in respect to a long anticipated, often retarded ending. "But then I see him every day. Do you really think—"

"You should see that everything is settled and in order," said the lawyer as he walked away.

CHAPTER XII.

FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

"And so Christopher went away to look for the great strong man that King Maximus was afraid of; but I forgot, his name was not Christopher then, but only Offero, a heathen; you know what a heathen is, Jock."

"I should think I did know; but go on, go on with the story; I never read this in any book."

"Well! Then Christopher wandered about everywhere over all the country asking for the strong man. He did not know whether it was a giant like himself,

or a King like Maximus, or what it was; but he went over the seas and up among the hills and into all the towns, looking for him."

"That is far too like a fairy tale for a Sunday," said Mrs. Ford, sitting behind in her big arm-chair. "My dear, if he had gone to the chief people in the country, the mayors of the towns, or the authorities, they would soon have told him—that is if he knew his name: and even in a fairy tale few people are so stupid as to set out in search of anyone without knowing his name."

Mrs. Ford was a trifle, just a trifle jealous. Lucy was not at all in the habit of interfering with her prerogative; but she did not like it. The "Pilgrim's Progress" she felt was much better entertainment on a Sunday night for any child.

"Oh, but this was not a person that the mayors and the magistrates knew. Listen, Jock, his name was Satan—now do you know who that great strong man was?"

"I thought as much, and it's all an allegory," said Jock, who was *blasé*, and tired of parables. "I like a story best when it doesn't mean anything; but go on, Lucy, all the same."

"I don't think it's an allegory. Katie Russell read it out of a book about the Saints. I believe it is a true story, only very, very long ago; many things happened long ago that don't happen now. I don't suppose the Queen has a big giant like Christopher in all her armies; but still there was once a Christopher, Jock."

Jock accepted the explanation with a little wave of his hand. He was glad, very glad, especially on

Sunday, of anything new, but at the same time he was critical, and at the first suggestion of an allegory stood on his guard.

"Well," said Lucy, resuming, "when Christopher had wandered about for a long time he met with a band of knights and their servants, travelling about as they used to do in those days, and at their head there was one all in black armour with a helmet covering his head and his face."

"You mean, I suppose," said Jock somewhat cynically, "with his visor down."

"I suppose so," said Lucy, a little confused, "but you know I am not so clever about these things as you are. I am afraid you don't care about my story, Jock."

"Oh, yes, I care about it; but unless there were enemies about, and he was afraid, he never would have had his visor down; and if he were afraid Christopher would have known he couldn't be much; but I like your story all the same," Jock added with great politeness; and he liked the *rôle* of critic, which was novel, too.

"He did not want to show his face," said Lucy considerably cowed, "because if people had seen him it would have been known what kind of a being he was, and he looked a very great prince with all his followers round him. So when Christopher heard that this was Satan, he went to him and offered his service; and he was one of his soldiers for a long time, I can't tell how long; but he did not like it at all, Jock, they did so many cruel things. At last one day, one very hot day in summer, they were all marching along, and there were two roads to the place where they were

going; one road led through a wood, and that was a pleasant shady way, and the other was the high road, which was dusty and scorching and not a bit of shelter; and you may suppose how astonished Christopher was when the captain refused to go by the pleasant way, though it was the shortest too."

"What was that for?" said Jock, excited mildly by an incident which he had not foreseen.

"He would not tell for a long time; first he said it was one thing and then another, but none of these reasons was the true one. At last Christopher so pressed and pressed that he got into a passion and it all came out. 'You great big blundering stupid giant,' he cried, 'don't you know there is a cross in the wood? But Christopher did not know what the cross meant; and then the black knight was obliged to tell him that he dared not pass the cross—because of One," here Lucy's voice sank into reverential tones, "who had been crucified upon it, and had won the battle, and had made even that dreadful black Spirit, that cruel Satan, tremble and fly."

Jock was impressed too, and there was a little pause, and in the ruddy twilight round the fire the two young creatures looked solemnly at each other; and a faint sound, something between a sigh and a sob, came from kind Mrs. Ford, over their heads, who was much touched and weeping-ripe at the turn, to her so unexpected, which the story had taken.

"And what did he do then?" asked Jock, not without awe.

"Oh, Jock! he dashed his great big fist in the black captain's face and shouted out, 'I knew you were a coward, you are so cruel. The man who hung

upon the cross, he is my master. I will go and seek him till I die.'"

Then there was another little pause—Lucy, too, in the excitement of her story-telling, having got a lump in her throat—and Mrs. Ford sobbed once more for pleasure.

"It is a beautiful story," she said; "I am very glad that the poor giant is going to be converted at the last."

"Ah, but now comes the difficult part," said Jock, "how was he to find Him? It was only a wooden image that was upon that cross; he might seek and seek, like the Knights in the 'Morte d'Arthur,' but how was he to find Him? that is what I want to know."

"Lucy, my dear, I think your papa wants you," said Ford, coming in at this point, a little more uneasy than usual, by dint of Mr. Rushton's warning. "He is sitting all alone, and he has just had his gas lighted." He came out to the door of the parlour to wait for her, as she rose and disengaged herself from her little brother, who caught her dress to detain her. Ford, at the door, put his hand on Lucy's arm. "Do you think he has been looking worse? don't let me frighten you, Lucy, but can you see any appearance as if he were sinking?"

"Do you mean papa? No," cried Lucy, with a start of alarm. "Is he ill? I will go to him directly. What is the matter?"

He had talked to her so much of his death that the girl's heart leapt into the excited throbbing which accompanies every great rallying of the forces of nature. All her strength might be required now, at once, without preparation. Her throat grew dry, and the blood rushed to her face.

"Oh, I don't think there is anything more than ordinary," said Ford; "but Mr. Rushton thought him looking bad. He gave me a fright! and then of course, my dear, at his time of life—"

Lucy drew her arm away, and went softly upstairs. Many daughters before now have had to smooth the way before a dying father, and there was nothing required of her in this way that was above her strength; but it was not with her in other things as with others. She was aware how great the change was which would open upon her, the moment this aged life had reached its term; and all the strange unknown conditions which would surround her. It was not possible for Lucy to thrust away the thought, and comfort herself with indefinite hopes. For years her thoughts had been directed to the catastrophe which was to be so momentous for her; she had never been allowed to ignore it. Her heart still beat loudly at the thought of that which might be coming now—which certainly must come before long. Her father was the centre of all her present living—beyond him lay the unknown; but when she went upstairs he was sitting quite cheerfully, as he had been sitting any time these ten years—almost since ever Lucy could remember, in his arm-chair, neither paler nor sadder, nor with any tragical symptoms in him, looking over, with the same air of satisfaction, the same large manuscripts in which, with his own small neat handwriting, he had written down his whole mind. He looked up as she came in, and gave her his usual little nod of welcome; and Lucy's heart immediately settled down into its usual calm. She took her usual seat beside him. All was as it had been for years in the familiar room; it was not, how-

ever, the familiar room which took any character from its inmates—or rather perhaps it embodied too entirely the character of its old master, who required nothing except his chimney-corner, and had no eye or taste for those niceties which reign in a lady's sitting-room, even when not a Queen Anne parlour of the newest old-fashion, like that of Mrs. Stone. Lucy had never been used to anything else, yet it repressed all emotion in her when she came into this un-emotional place. Die! why should anyone ever die? Would not to-day be as yesterday for ever, and every hour the same?

"I have had Rushton here," said the old man; "how fat that man is getting at his age! I don't suppose he is fifty yet. I am glad I am not one of the fat kind, Lucy; it must be such a trouble. And to think I remember him a slim boy, not much higher than you are. Hasn't he got a son?"

"Yes, papa; Raymond. I used to play with him when I was little. He is quite grown up now. Mrs. Rushton was telling me about him—"

"Take my advice, Lucy," said her father, interrupting her; "and don't, however it may be pressed upon you, marry a man out of Farafield. Plenty will try for you—very likely Raymond himself. I thought there was something in Rushton's eye—it was that made me think of it. Don't marry a man from here. There's nothing but paltry sort of people here."

"Yes, papa;" said Lucy, calmly. She had given a great many other promises on this question of her marriage, with the same composure. There was no excitement in her own mind about the question. She did not care what pledges she gave. Her father, who

was not without humour, perceived this, and fixed his eyes upon her with his usual chuckle.

"Yes, papa!" he said, mimicking her small voice. "Anything for a quiet life; you would promise me not to marry the Mayor, or to marry the Bishop, if I asked you, just in the same tone."

"No, papa; I will promise *not* to marry anybody you choose to mention; but the other thing would be more difficult. In the first place I don't know the Bishop," she added, with a smile.

"That is all very well," said the old man; "but don't you know, Lucy, that in a year or two your mind may change on that subject? You might fall in love, not with the Bishop, but why not with Raymond Rushton, or any other boy about the place? And this is what I want to say to you, my dear. Don't! That is to say, keep them at a distance, Lucy. Don't let them come near enough to get hold of you. Take my word for it, though they may be nice enough in their way, Farafield people are small. They are petty people. They don't know the world; and you, with your fortune, my dear, you belong to the world, not to a little place like this."

"But you have lived all your life in Farafield?"

"Oh yes; that is quite true. And I am just the same kind; petty, that is the word, Lucy,—small. That is why I am living like this, making no change till it all comes into your hands. Living in a grand house, spending a deal of money, would go against me—I should not like it. I should grudge every penny—I should say to myself, you old fool, John Trevor! what do you mean by spending all this upon yourself? I couldn't do it. Carriages and horses and a number of servants would be the death of me."

"I don't think I shall like them any better, papa; and if it is waste for you, it would also be waste for me."

"Not at all, not at all," he said; "you have been brought up to it; and it will be your duty, for property has duties, Lucy. It is just as necessary that you should spend a great deal on your living, and keep up a great show, as it is that you should give a great deal to the poor."

"But why then, papa, if you think that, am I to live here with the Fords, who do not understand anything of the kind, half of the year."

"Aha, Lucy!" he said, "that is just my principle, you know; that is what you don't understand as yet. You are to live with Lady Randolph and the Fords, six months each, for—unless you can get them all to consent to let you marry somebody before that time—as long as you are a girl, my dear;—this is the very crown of my plan, Lucy, without which the other would not be good for much," he said, rubbing his hands with satisfaction, and pausing to tantalize her. As it was Sunday, Lucy had not her knitting, so that she had nothing to do but to look at him, with perfect placid composure as usual, showing no scrap of excitement.

"Do you mean it is to be only for a time, papa?"

"For—seven years," he said; "seven years from the time of my death. It is to be hoped that my death will not be very long of coming, or you will be too old to enjoy your freedom. But there is not much fear of that; even if you were thirty before it came, thirty is the finest time of life. You know a

great deal by that time; you are not so easily taken in, and you are still fresh and in all your glory. Never mind if fools begin to call you an old maid; a woman is not an old maid at thirty, she is at her best. She can pick and choose, especially when she has a fortune like yours. And by that time you will have got out of the young set—the ballroom set; you will have learned to know people of importance. Yes," he said, chuckling; "that is the crown of my plan for you, Lucy—for seven years you will be under a little restraint; Mrs. Ford on one hand, Lady Randolph on the other, two people, I flatter myself, just as unlike as can be; and all the men that have a chance will be after you; but none of them will be able to marry you without the consent, you know," he went on chuckling once more, "of all these people; which I confess, Lucy, I take to be next to impossible. And then, my dear —then: in seven years complete freedom—freedom to do whatever you like—to marry whom you like—to be your own guardian—your own adviser. It is worth waiting for, Lucy—well worth waiting for. What a prospect!" cried the old man, in an ecstacy; "a well-trained mind used to control, an inexhaustible fortune, nothing to do but to pick and choose among the best people, and still under thirty years of age! By that time you will have learned to be content with nothing less than the best."

Nothing could be more curious than the pleased excitement of the old man, looking forward to this climax of mortal felicity which he had carefully arranged for his child; and the perfect calm of the child herself, who neither realised nor appreciated that blessedness. She said, after a while, with a soft little sigh,

which was half weariness and half a sense of the dreariness of the prospect,

"I should think it would be very nice—for a man, papa."

"For a man! nonsense, Lucy; that is just an old-fashioned notion. A woman who is thirty, and has a great fortune, and is free to please herself, is as good as any man."

This was not exactly Lucy's point of view, but she had no gift for argument. She thought it was time to take refuge in a little harmless gossip, which was the only thing that now and then gave her the possibility of an escape from the will.

"Mrs. Stone has a visitor," she said, "a gentleman come to see her. Mademoiselle thinks it very wrong to have a gentleman where there are so many girls. He is Mrs. Stone's nephew; his name is Mr. Frank St. Clair. It is quite a pretty name, isn't it, papa? and he is good-looking, though Katie says it is the barber's block style. How I know is, that Katie and I went to Mrs. Stone's parlour to tea. She never asks more than two girls on Sunday, and it shows she is pleased with you when she asks you. We all like to be asked to the parlour to tea."

"Ah!" said old Trevor. He laughed and looked at Lucy with a great many nods of his grey head. "Mrs. Stone is generally pleased with *you*, eh, Lucy? She is a sensible woman; she knows what's what, as well as anyone, I know. And so she has had her nephew down *already*. She is a clever woman, a prompt woman. I have a great opinion of Mrs. Stone."

"Do you know him, then," said Lucy, with a little surprise. "She said she was going to bring him to

call. She said she could not pretend to entertain him at the White House, which is given up to education, and that it would be nice for him to be able to come and talk to you."

At this Mr. Trevor chuckled more and more; he rubbed his hands with glee.

"She is quite capable of it," he cried, delighted, "quite capable of it. She is a clever woman, Lucy. I have always had a great admiration for Mrs. Stone."

"Capable of what?" said Lucy, almost angry. She, for her part, had a great admiration for Mrs. Stone. She had a girl's belief in, and loyalty to the elder woman, who yet was not too old to be out of sympathy with girls. She admired her mature beauty, her dress, everything about her, and to hear Mrs. Stone laughed at was painful to Lucy. It affected that *esprit de corps* which is next to self-regard, or sometimes even goes before it. She felt her own moral standing involved when anyone questioned, or seemed to question, the superiority of her leader. It was almost the only occasion on which any latent gleam of temper came to Lucy's mild eyes.

Mr. Trevor laughed again.

"You don't understand it, my dear," he said, "it's a joke between Mrs. Stone and me. She is capable of making me a party to my own defeat," he said, with a new series of chuckles, "of bringing me into the conspiracy against myself. That's what I call clever, Lucy: Oh, she's a very able woman! but let us hope this time she won't be so successful as she deserves. Fore-warned is fore-armed; I know now what I've got to look forward to, and I hope she won't find me an easy prey, my dear, thanks to you."

"I cannot in the least tell what you mean, papa," said Lucy, with dignity, "and if it is anything against Mrs. Stone, I don't want to know; and *I* hope she will be successful, whatever she wishes to do—though I don't know what it is," the girl added, with a vehemence quite unusual to her. It brought the colour to her usually pale cheek. She got up from her chair with angry haste. "I am going to get ready for dinner," she said, "and if I have said anything to set you against Mrs. Stone, I did not mean it, and I am very sorry. It must be my fault, for I am quite sure there is nothing wrong in anything *she* wants to do."

It was as if Lucy flounced out of the room, so different was it from her usual calm, though even now her demeanour was quiet enough. But her father was not much affected by the girl's vehemence. He sat looking after her and chuckled, watching her grey gown whisk—nay, almost whisk—the word was too violent to be employed to any movement of Lucy's; round the corner of the big screen, and thought to himself how wise he had been, and how clever in choosing an instructress for Lucy of whom she thought so well. Mrs. Stone's design, which he thought he had found out, amused and, indeed, pleased him too. He liked to see that this fortune, of which he thought so much, produced a corresponding effect upon others, and, indeed, would have been disappointed if there had been nobody "after" it during his lifetime. This was the first, and he chuckled over the advent of the suitor, whom he determined to play and amuse himself with. That Mrs. Stone should have begun to scheme already did not displease, rather flattered him, especially as it gave him a fresh evidence of his own penetration in

finding her out, and confidence in his own power of baffling her. Another man might have been taken in, but not he. There he sat complacent, while Lucy changed her grey gown for a blue one.

All these habits and customs of a life more refined than his own, the old man had done his best to train his daughter into. For a time, he had even gone so far as to put himself into an evening coat for Lucy's sake, but increasing weakness had persuaded him to give up that penitential ceremony. Still he exacted, vigorously and religiously, that she should dress for dinner, and would indeed have made her come down with bare shoulders every evening to the homely meal, but for the interference of Mrs. Stone, who had declared it "old fashioned" with great energy, to the complete annihilation of poor old Trevor, who had thought himself certain of this important special feature of high life.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LAST CLAUSE.

It is not to be supposed that in the *tête-à-tête* dinner that followed, Lucy was set free from the interminable subject of that fortune which occupied all her father's thoughts. The idea of perfect freedom in seven years had but newly dawned upon him—though, as soon as he had thought of it, he felt it to be, as he had said, the natural crown of his plan, and climax of his thoughts. Up to the moment the great idea had dawned upon him, there had been a little sense of

imperfection in his plans. They were elaborate preparations for—nothing. But now he had seized the end to which all the preparations led. Neither the Fords nor Lady Randolph could be expected to live for ever in order to keep Lucy under subjection, nor would she always be under the superintendence of the matrimonial committee. The absurdity became apparent to the framer of the scheme just as he found the deliverance from it. And now that the climax had been attained, all the parts fell into due subordination. Restraint until she had fully tried all the preliminaries of life and learned to estimate the worth of time; and then full freedom and the control of herself and all that belonged to her. It seemed to old Trevor, as he thought it over, a beautiful scheme; to-morrow he would put fully on record these last stipulations, and when that was done there would be no more to do but to gather his garments round him and go out of the way. It must not be supposed, however, that any real idea of getting out of the way was in the old man's mind. He could not doubt that somehow he would still be in the midst of it, though he professed to be quite sure of dying and passing into another life; that was a matter of course—but when he rubbed his hands with satisfaction over the completeness of his plans, there was no feeling in his mind that completeness involved conclusion. On the contrary, he seemed to see the prospect widening out before him. He enjoyed in anticipation not only the admirable wisdom of all his own stipulations, but even the amusing complications to which they would give birth; and then with a thrill of pride and satisfaction looked forward to the time of her freedom and happy reign, and

power of self-disposal, nor ever once said to himself, "I shall be out of it all — what will it be to me?"

However, Mr. Trevor's mind was so full of this new idea that he could do nothing but show, over and over again, how beautifully it fitted in with every previous arrangement, and how naturally everything led up to this.

"Of course," he said, "to keep you under control all your days was what I never thought, my dear. What I intended all along was to train you to a right use of your liberty. Only when you are able to bear the burden, Lucy—when you have seen a great many fancies drop off, and a great deal that you have believed in fail you, and when you have learned to know what is the best."

"Do you think that is so hard, papa?" said Lucy quietly, yet with a faint half-gleam of a smile. No doubt it was natural that at his age he should make "a fuss" about everything Lucy felt, though she was so sensible that, of course, she would choose nothing but the best.

"Yes, it is very hard," said the old man, "one tries a great many things before one comes to that. "A good-looking fellow, perhaps, for a lover, or a nice-mannered girl for a friend—till you find out that they are naught, neither one, nor the other, and that you have got to begin again; that's the way of the world. Then perhaps you will choose some others quite different, and they will cheat you too. You get a little more and a little more experience at every step, and then at the end you will find somebody, as I found poor Lucilla, that is really the best."

Lucy looked up at him aghast. The idea made her tremble; first one bad and then another, and at last a Lucilla who would die, and be in her turn succeeded by another, who was not the best. This gave the girl a shudder.

"I would rather put up with the bad ones," she cried, "if I am fond of them, than go from one to another; it is horrible what you are saying, papa."

"Well, perhaps it is," said old Trevor, "life's not so very beautiful, whatever you may think just now; but what I am saying is right, that is one thing I am certain of. You may content yourself with what's inferior if you like, Lucy; but you can't expect any encouragement from me——"

She looked at him with a little alarm in her eyes. "It would be better to have nothing to do with anybody, to live all alone by one's-self, and never care for anybody——" she cried.

"Many people do that," said old Trevor, "but I don't approve of it Lucy. Take example by me. I had seen a many before I saw your mother, but I never had got any satisfaction to my mind till I met with Lucilla. I used to say to myself, this one won't do, and that one won't do. You see I kept my wits about me, and my head clear. Now that's the plan you must go upon, both with friends, and with a husband if you marry. You don't need to marry unless you like—I don't say one thing or the other—you are to please yourself. But don't take the first that comes, don't take anyone till you've tried him and tested him. And the same with your friends—take 'em, and leave 'em, and choose again till you have found the best."

"It is horrible, papa!" cried Lucy almost with tears.

Then, though she was not an imaginative girl, there suddenly came across her mind the story which she had been telling to little Jock. She had denied stoutly that it was an allegory, as Jock's more experienced imagination had at once feared; but there was something in the course of this conversation which chimed in with it, which brought it to her mind. Just so had the giant in that story sought his strongest and greatest. The end of the tale which she had not told to Jock was very incomprehensible to Lucy herself. She had not understood it when it was "read out loud," but it did not trouble her mind much. She thought it would do for a story to tell Jock, that was all. Now she thought of it again as she sat over the almonds and raisins opposite to her father and listened to him, and shrank from the map of life which he opened out before her. His revelations went up to just about the same point as the story she had told to Jock. And after that came the incomprehensible part, how to discern the best, how to get to the acquaintance of the mysterious conqueror of all. Jock had said that was the difficult bit. In the story it was all a confusion to Lucy, and she could not understand it at all.

While she was thinking thus, her father was talking on, but she had lost a good deal of what he was saying when she suddenly came to herself again, and began to hear him as if his voice came out of a mist.

"And when that has happened once or twice," old Trevor was saying, "you get sharp, oh, you get sharp!

you are up to their devices—you cannot be taken in any more."

"You speak as if everybody tried to take you in, papa."

"Very near everybody," said old Trevor, grinning, with a chuckle, "not all, I don't say all—but very near; and the hard thing is to find out the ones that don't want to take you in. That is a thing which you have to learn by experience, Lucy. First you trust everybody—then you trust nobody; but after a while the sight comes back to your eyes, and you know who to trust. That is about the best lesson you can have in this world. I was over fifty before I met with your mother; that is to say, I had known her when we were younger, but I had not given any attention to her, not having learned then to discriminate. We saw a deal of each other for two years before we married—so you see I was a long time before I got hold of my best, and yet I did get it at the end."

Lucy was disturbed out of her usual composure by all this alarming and discouraging talk, and she was slightly irritated, she could scarcely have told why, by all she had heard about her mother. She could not avoid a little retaliation. "But afterwards," she said, "after—when poor mamma died—was that the best too?"

He had been discoursing as from a pulpit upon his own wisdom and success, and received this thrust full in his face with astonishment that was comic. After the first confusion of surprise, old Trevor laughed and chuckled himself out of breath. "You have me there," he said, "Lucy, you have me there. I have not got a word to say. We won't say anything on the subject

at all, my dear. I told you before that was a mistake."

But he was half flattered, half amused by this return blow. During the rest of the evening, he would drop into ceaseless chuckles, recalling the sudden boldness of the assault. A man of many wives is always more flattered than disconcerted by any allusion to his successes. It was a mistake, but still he was not ashamed of his achievement. When, however, he had taken his glass of port, which had more effect upon him than usual in his growing weakness, the old man grew penitential. "It was a great mistake," he said again, "and I can't help wondering, now and then, how Lucilla will take it. She was a very considerate person; but there are things that the best of women can't be expected to put up with. I will confess to you, Lucy, that it makes me a little uneasy sometimes. Oh, yes! it was a mistake."

Lucy had been quite re-assured when she had joined her father in the afternoon after Ford's warning, and had seen no difference in his looks; but before the evening was over, a vague uneasiness had crept over her. He talked more than usual and sat longer than usual before he could be persuaded to go to bed. And now and then there was something disjointed in his talk. He stopped short in the middle of a sentence, and forgot to finish it. He introduced one subject into the midst of another. He gave her the same advice several times over. After a while she ceased to notice what he was saying altogether, out of anxiety about him. He was not like himself; but he would not allow her to leave him. He was more intent on having her companionship than she had ever

known him. "Don't go away," he said, when she did but stir in her chair. As she sat and looked at him, having no knitting (as it was Sunday), the spectacle of the feeble old figure, garrulous, holding forth from his chair, scarcely waiting for a reply, struck the girl as if she had seen it for the first time. His old cheeks were suffused with a feverish red, his eyes were gleaming, his head had a tremble in it, his lean old hand, so often used to emphasize what he said, shook when he held it up. There are moments when the aspects of a familiar figure change to us, when we see it as strangers see it, but with a still keener insight, perceiving, in a moment, the wreck which we may have seen without seeing it, falling into decay for years. This was the revelation which all at once came upon Lucy. She had seen nothing unusual about him a few hours ago—now, quite suddenly, she came to see him as Mr. Rushton had seen him, as he appeared to strangers; but in a guise so much the more alarming as it concerned her much more closely. She held her breath as this revelation flashed upon her, feeling as if she must cry out and call for help, she who was so composed and unexcitable. It seemed to Lucy, in her sudden alarm and ignorance, that he might die before her eyes.

This, of course, was an entirely false alarm. Next morning he was exactly like himself again, no special feebleness in his aspect, and much energy in his mind. As soon as he got settled in his chair, Mr. Trevor got his big manuscript out, took a fresh pen which Ford had mended for him, and began to work with great energy and pleasure. Never had he more enjoyed his work; he was putting on the corner stone—finishing

the fabric. It took him all the morning to put everything down as he had planned it. And it pleased him so much that he smiled and chuckled to himself as he wrote, and said special phrases over and over under his breath. All the morning through, he sat at his table working at it—while little Jock occupied his habitual position stretched out upon the white rug before the fire, his shoulders raised a little, his head bent over his book. Jock was too much absorbed to be aware of anything that was going on. The book he had lighted upon that day was Defoe's "History of the Plague," and the little fellow was altogether given over to its weird fascinations. It was more entrancing even than "Robinson Crusoe." Thus the child and the old man kept each other company for hours together; the one betraying his presence occasionally by a little flicker of two small blue legs from the white rug, and of the pages of his book, itself half buried in the silky whiteness; while the other chuckled and muttered as he wrote, delighted with himself and his latest conception. They were both living by the imagination, though in phases so different; the boy carried out of himself, lost in the wonderful dream-history which was so much more real than anything else around him: the old man throwing himself forward into a future he should never see, enacting a dream life, which was to be when his should be ended and over—but which in its visionary distance was also a thousand times more real than the dull day to which it gave a fictitious charm.

When the clause was finished, Mr. Trevor once more called up Ford, and made him acquainted with his new conception. Ford studied him attentively

while he read it, but he also listened with benevolent attention; and he gave his approval to the new plan. Seven years! Ford was just about so much the junior of his friend and patron. He said to himself, as he listened, that by that time he would no longer care to have the responsibility of superintending Lucy's actions; and he graciously concurred in the expediency of her liberation. "If she cannot manage her own affairs at thirty or so, she never will," he said, "and I think, Mr. Trevor, that you're in the right."

"If I go soon," said the old man, "she'll be five-and-twenty, and no more; and I think I'll go soon; but nobody can answer for a year or two. Yes, I think it's a pretty will as it stands; I don't think, without any partiality, that you'll find many like it. There's nothing that can happen to her, so far as human insight goes, that I have not foreseen and left directions for. I hope I have not been insensible to my responsibilities, Ford. I've tried to be father and mother both. If you can point out anything that I've neglected—"

"Mr. Trevor," said the other; "you've thought of a many more things than would ever have come into my head. You've discharged your duties nobly; and I and Susan will do our part. You need not be afraid; we'll take your example for our guide, and we'll do our part."

"Just so, just so," said the old man, not so much interested. It was essential, no doubt, that his will should be carried out; but he did not realize so clearly, and perhaps he did not wish to realize, that he would himself have no hand in carrying it out. When the question was put as to how the Fords were to do their part, his attention flagged. "You are not to be the

first, you know," he said, brusquely; "there's my Lady Randolph that comes first."

Here Ford began to shake his head. "If you took my opinion, I'd say that was the one weak point," he said; "I make bold to say it, though I know you will be offended, Mr. Trevor. That's the weak point. It's well intended, very well intended; but that's the weak point."

"You blockhead!" said the other; but he kept his temper. "You would keep her in Farafield all her life, I shouldn't wonder, and have all the little cads in the place after her! and never let her have a glimpse of the world."

"I don't know what you call the world," said Ford. "Human nature is the same everywhere. We are just the same lot wherever you take us—and as for cads there's Sir Thomas ——. I thank the Lord I don't know anybody in Farafield—nobody in my own class of life—that has been so tiresome, that has been as wild—"

"You let Sir Thomas alone," said old Trevor; "he never was a cad."

Upon which Ford continued to shake his head. "It may be a word that I don't fathom," he said; "I don't know one in Farafield that has given as much trouble; and he's always in want of money; it's like putting the lamb into the clutches of the wolf."

"There are plenty of wolves," said the old man. "That's my policy; I set one to fight the other, and I wish them joy of it. One here and one there, that's better than a single candidate. And while they're pulling each other to pieces, my little lamb will get off scot-free."

Ford shook his head persistently, till it seemed doubtful if it ever would recover its steadiness. "If I were to speak my mind," he said; "there's one that has a real claim—just one. He's maybe too modest to speak for himself; but there *is* one, if I were to speak my mind—"

"Then don't!" said old Trevor, with a fiercer gleam in his eyes; "that's my advice to you, Richard Ford. Don't! I want to hear nothing of your one that has a claim. Who has any claim? not a soul in the world! Lucy's fortune is her own—she's obliged to nobody for it. It comes to her, not from me, that I should take upon me to pick and choose. She does not get a penny from me; all I have I've given to the other, and a very good nest egg too for his position in life. But Lucy's fortune is none of my making; Lucy is Lucilla's daughter."

"Susan's cousin!" said Ford, instinctively. He regretted it the next moment; but he could not withhold this protest. To think that all the money should be Lucilla's, and none of it come to Susan, though she was Lucilla's cousin! It is hard, it must be allowed, to see fortunes come so near, yet have no share in them. In the family; yet not yours, not the smallest bit yours, save by grace and favour of a stranger, a man who is your cousin's husband, indeed, but has no claim otherwise to belong to the family. The Fords were not at all ungrateful to old Trevor; but still there were moments when this struck them in spite of themselves.

CHAPTER XIV.

A FALSE ALARM.

THE prophets of evil were not deceived; when a kind of general impression arises in respect to an invalid that a crisis is approaching, it almost always is justified by the event. During that very night there was a sudden alarm; Mr. Trevor's bell rang loudly, awakening all the house. Lucy flew from her room, hastily gathering her dressing-gown round her, with her light hair hanging about her shoulders, and Mrs. Ford appeared in a night-cap, which was an indecorum she recollected long afterwards. The maids naturally, being less interested, were harder to rouse, and it was Mr. Ford himself who issued forth in the penetrating chill of the early morning, still quite dark and silent, not a soul astir, and buttoning himself into his warmest overcoat, went out in the cold to seek a doctor, who, for his part, was just as unwilling to be roused out of his slumbers in the middle of the night. Jock, roused by the sounds, sat up in his little bed, with wide-awake eyes, hearing the bell still jar and tinkle, and sounds of people running up and downstairs, which half frightened, half re-assured him. To hear other people moving about is always a comfort to a child, and so was the reflection of the lamp at the gateway of the Terrace, which shone into his room and kept it light. Jock sat up and gazed with big eyes, and wondered, but was too much awed and alarmed by the nocturnal disturbance to move; and, indeed, as it turned out after, there was not much need for anyone to be disturbed.

Old Trevor's explanation was that he had woke up with a loud singing in his ears, and sense of giddiness, and he could not articulate at first, when they rushed to his bedside, so that everybody believed it to be a "stroke." But when the doctor came he declared that, though the patient's blood was running like a river in flood, yet that there was nothing very particular the matter, and that a day or two's quiet would make him all right. Mrs. Ford, in her night-cap, remained by the newly-lighted fire in Mr. Trevor's room to take care of him; but the rest were all sent back to bed, and when the breakfast hour arrived the patient pronounced himself as well as ever. He got up at his usual hour, and would not even allow that, as Mrs. Ford suggested, he felt "shaky."

"Not a bit shaky," he declared, putting out one shrunken shank to show how steadily he stood on the other; "but I thought my time was come," he said. "I'll allow I thought I had reached it, after looking for it so long. It was a queer feeling. I am just as well pleased to put it off a bit, though it must come soon."

"That is true," Ford said, shaking his head; "we must all die; but the youngest may go off before the oldest, as happens every day."

These were the words that little Jock heard as they came into the drawing-room, the old man leaning on the arm of the other. Where was the youngest to go off to? He understood vaguely, and a momentary thrill ran through his little veins. Was it he that might "go" before his father? it was a thing which seemed to lie between the eldest and the youngest. Jock's mind was full of the plague and all its horrible

details, and the wonder and mystery of thus going "off" chimed in with this gloomy yet fascinating study; the recollection of the bell tinkling through the streets, the dead-cart stopping at the door, scared yet excited him. But there was no plague, no dead-cart, no tinkling bell at Farafield. After a while the impression died out of the child's mind, but scarcely so quickly as it did out of the mind of his old father, who already chuckled to himself over the fright he had given the house. Mr. Trevor did justice to the people who surrounded him.

"When it really comes they will be sorry," he said; "but it was a disappointment."

He liked to think he had disappointed them; even in getting better, a man cannot but feel that his own superior sense and strength of character have something to do with it. Another man would not have rallied, would have been capable of dying, perhaps, and cutting short all the interest of his story; but not John Trevor, who knew better what he was about.

The night-alarm, however, soon became known over Farafield, and many people had sufficient interest in the old man and his daughter to come, or send, and make inquiries. Among these he had one visitor who amused and one who angered him. The first was a stranger, who sent up a card with the name of Mr. Frank St. Clair, and a message from Mrs. Stone, who begged to have the last news of the sufferer. "Show him up, show him up," old Trevor said, his keen eyes twinkling with malice and humour; but when the large figure of the young barrister (for that was Mr. Frank St. Clair's profession) entered the room, the old man was impressed, in spite of himself, by the solidity

and imposing proportions of Mrs. Stone's nephew and candidate; there was an air of respectability about him which compelled attention. He was handsome, but he was also serious, and had that air of a man who has given hostages to society, which nothing confers so surely as this tendency to a comfortable and respectable fulness of frame. Old Trevor acknowledged to himself that this was no young dandy, but a man, possibly, of weight of character as well as person; his very tendency (to speak politely) to *embonpoint* conciliated the old man. Schemers are seldom fat. Mr. Frank St. Clair looked respectable to the tips of his well-brushed boots, and, as he looked at him, old Trevor was mollified in spite of himself.

"Yes, I gave them a fright," he said. "I thought myself that matters were coming to a crisis; but it was a false alarm. You may tell your aunt that I am as well as ever, and as clear in my intellects as ever—such intellects as I have."

"Nobody would doubt that, I think," said St. Clair; and indeed Mr. Trevor flattered himself that nobody could doubt it. He was as clearly aware of the effect upon a stranger of his own keen eyes and vivacious wide-awake aspect as anyone could be."

"There's no telling," said the old man; "some people think they can take me in—which is a mistake, Mr. St. Clair—a great mistake."

"I should think so," said St. Clair, with easy composure. "If you will let me, I will sit down," he said; "if there is nothing to occupy you for the moment, I wonder if you will let me ask your advice about a little money I have?"

Again the malicious gleam awoke in old Trevor's

eyes, a mixture of suspicion, admiration, and interest moved him. Every man who had money interested him more or less; but if this was a dodge on Mrs. Stone's part, the move was one which might have filled any like-minded artist with admiration. He chuckled as he invited the confidence of his visitor—yet though he thought he saw through the deceit, he respected St. Clair all the same for having money to invest, even if it were not his own, but lent to him for the occasion; it threw a halo of interest round him in old Trevor's eyes.

"So that's the first of them," he said to himself, when St. Clair took his departure; "that's number one of the pack. Women are quick about it, they don't let the grass grow under their feet. Rushton will keep quiet, he won't let his lad show in my sight. But the women are bold—they're always bold. And I wonder who my lady will bring forward?" The old man laughed; he was pleased by the thought of the coming struggle. It did not give him any concern that his young daughter should be left alone in the midst of it, to be competed for by so many hungry aspirants. "I'd like to be there to see the wolves at it," he said aloud, with a grin on his face.

At the sound of the voice over his head, little Jock turned round upon his rug. Wolves were in his way; from Red Riding-hood upwards, he knew a great deal about them; he had heard them in the forests pursuing the travellers, and knew what the howl meant when it occurred in a story in the midst of the black winter night. He turned right round, with the "History of the Plague" in his arms, and faced his father look-

ing upward from the rug. "What is it about wolves?" said Jock.

No question could have surprised old Trevor more; he looked round him first in suspicion, to see where the voice came from, then looked down upon the child with a gape of wonder. "Eh! do you know anything about wolves, my lad?" he said.

"Oh, a great deal!" said Jock, calmly; "I could tell you heaps of stories about them; the worst of all is that one about the woman and her children. I told it to Lucy, and she would not let me tell it out. Would you like me to tell it to you?"

Jock spoke to his father on very much the footing of an equal. They did not as a rule take much notice of each other; but the curious way in which they pursued their lives together had given the old man and the little boy a sort of tacit fellowship, not at all like the usual relation between father and child. Not once in two or three months was there any conversation between them, and this gave all the more importance to their occasional intercourse. "There was once a woman," said Jock, "travelling through a wild, wild forest, and she had her three little children with her —quite little, little things, littler than me a great deal; when all of a sudden she heard pad, pad, something coming behind her! It wasn't quite night, but it was getting dark, darker and darker every moment; and the old white horse got awfully frightened, and the forest was miles and miles long. She knew she couldn't come to a village, or a house, for ever so long. And she heard them coming on faster and faster; sniffing and panting, and all after her, hundreds and hundreds of them; they're like dogs you know," said Jock, paren-

thetically, looking up from the rug, where he lay on his back, with the "History of the Plague" laid open on his breast; "they bark and they howl, just like dogs, when you hear them far off in the woods; but when they're after you, they go straight before them, like the wind blowing, and never make any sound."

"And what became of the woman and the children?" said old Trevor, partly amused, partly impressed.

"The white horse* galloped on and on," said Jock, with the instinct of a story-teller; "and the wolves came after pad, pad, all like one, though there were hundreds and hundreds of them, and the woman in the sleigh (did I tell you it was a sleigh? but I don't know rightly myself what a sleigh is), got wild with fright, and the three little things cried, and the trees made a noise against the sky; and the wood got deeper and deeper, and the night darker and darker; and then she heard them all panting behind her, and their breath hot upon her, and every moment she thought they would jump up behind and crunch her with their teeth——"

"Go on, child, go on;" said old Trevor. "I think I've heard the story; but I don't remember how she got out of it."

"This is what Lucy will never listen to," said Jock, solemnly; "she says it can't be true; she says there never was a woman like that. She says she'll beat me if I go on; but it is the real end to the story all the same. Well, you know, the woman was wild; she didn't know what she was doing. Just when they were going to crunch her with their teeth in her neck, she turned round, and she took up one of the children

* The poem of Ivan Ivanovitch had not been written in those days, and perhaps it might have been above Jock's understanding.

and flung it out into the middle of the wolves; and the little thing gave just one more cry (he was crying, you know, before), and the wolves caught him in their big teeth, and tore him, one a piece here and another a piece there, hundreds and hundreds of them; and the old white horse galloped on and on.

"Well, but then that was only one," said Jock resuming after a pause, "when they had eaten that little thing all up, they were not half satisfied, and they said to each other 'come on,' and two minutes after, what should the woman hear, but the whole mob of them after her again, and the sound of them panting and their breaths on her neck. And she took hold of another little child——"

"You need'nt tell me any more," said the old man; "where did you get these dreadful stories?—they turn one sick."

"She threw them all out, the first, and the second, and the third," cried the boy making haste to complete his narrative, "and then she was saved herself. Lucy never gets further than the first; but you've heard the second. And she says it can't be true, but it is true," said Jock severely, "many people have told it. I've read another story——"

"Hold your tongue, child," said the old man.

Which Jock did at once. He was ready to come forward, to recount his experience, or instruct others by his large amount of miscellaneous reading whenever it was necessary, but he did not thrust his information upon unwilling ears. He turned round again promptly, and, laying his book down on the white rug, supported himself on his elbows and resumed his reading. Jock had a perfectly good conscience, and could

hear any number of parables (though he was always suspicious of them) without turning a hair.

But old Trevor was not equally innocent; he trembled a little within himself at that story of remorseless self-preservation. The wolves were the image he had himself used, and when he remembered that he had looked forward to their struggle with amusement, and indeed done his utmost to draw them together, without much regard for the lamb who was to escape as she could from their clutches, a momentary tremor of conscience came over him. But it did not last long; impressions of this kind seldom do; and when he received a second visit in the evening, this time from Philip Rainy, who expressed much solicitude about his health, old Trevor had ceased to feel any compunctions about the fierce competition to which he was going to expose his child. But he was firmly determined that the first and most natural competitor, the man who was of the family, and had a sort of claim to everything that belonged to the name, should not be, so to speak, in the running at all.

"I am very well," he said, "quite well, thank you; there is nothing the matter with me. If people say to the contrary they're lying, or at the best they're fools meddling in other folks' affairs. It's nothing to anyone if I'm ill or well."

"You must pardon me, uncle," said Philip, "but it is something to me."

The familiar grin came upon the old man's face: but it was not accompanied with a chuckle of not unkindly mirth, as it had been in the case of Mrs. Stone's nephew, in whose favour there was no such potent argument.

"I don't know what it should be to you," he said, "Mr. Philip Rainy: if you had been waiting for my shoes I could have understood—but you've got 'em, you've got 'em, more fool I; and if you think there is anything more coming to you when I die, you're mistaken, that's all I've got to say. My will's made—and there's no legacies in it, not one. My money goes to them that have a right to it. There's no fancy items to satisfy those that have gone out of their way, or thought they'd gone out of their way, to flatter an old man. So that it's no good, no possible good, to take that friendly interest in me."

Lucy, who was sitting by when this was said, started and got up from her knitting, and went once more behind her father, where she stood looking pitifully at Philip, clasping her hands together, and imploring him with her eyes not to be angry. That would have been inducement enough to bear with the old man's brutal incivility, if there had been nothing more. He gave her a slight, almost imperceptible nod, re-assuring her, and answered with a calmness which did him infinite credit, and indeed cost him a great effort.

"I am sorry you think so badly of me," he said, "but I will not defend myself. I am waiting for no old shoes, heaven knows. I should like to be of use to my relations—to you or to Lucy. But, if you will not let me, I must put up with it. And I will not stay longer now, since you have so poor an opinion of me. Good night, I am going away; but I shall not cease to think about you, though I do not see you. You have been very kind to me, substantially kind," said Philip, rising slowly with a lingering look at the father

and daughter, "I owe all that I am, and something of what I may be to you, and I want no more, Mr. Trevor, no legacies, nothing but a way of showing my gratitude. If I am not to be allowed to do this, why, I must submit. Good night."

There was a quaver of real feeling in the young man's voice. It was true enough, and if there was something more that was likewise true, the *suppressio veri* is in some cases a very venial fault. As for Lucy, what with sympathy and indignation and shame for her father's conduct, she was more tenderly inclined towards Philip than she had ever been in her life. Thus opposition usually works. She cast an indignant look at her father, and a strenuous protest in the shape of an exclamation: "Papa!" which spoke volumes; and then in spite of his call to her to remain, she followed Philip as he went downstairs, appealing to him also, in a different way, with the tears in her eyes.

"You will not mind, Philip; but please don't stop coming or quarrel because he is cross. He is ill, that is the reason, he is not himself; but I am sure you are too sensible to mind."

Philip shook his head with a smile. "I fear I am not so sensible," he said, "I do mind; but, Lucy, if you will always speak to me as kindly I shall not mind what anyone else may say," he added with fervour. He had never gone so far, or felt inclined to go so far before.

Lucy was surprised by this new tone, and looked at him, not with alarm, but with a mild astonishment. However, as it did not occur to her that there could be any special meaning in it, she gave him her hand

kindly as usual, nay, a little more kindly, in that her father had used him so badly.

"It does not matter very much about me," she said, "but I am very, very sorry papa has been so—strange. It is only because he is ill, very ill still. They all think he is better, but I don't think so; his hand is so hot and trembling, and there is such a wild sort of brightness in his eyes. I am not easy about him, but very unhappy. I wish to-night was over," she said, the tears falling in a little shower from her eyes.

"Lucy! let me stay; will you let me stay? He need not know that I am here, but I could sit up downstairs and be ready to run for the doctor, or to do anything."

"It is very good of you, Philip; but how would you be fit for your work if you sat up all night? No, no, I cannot let you do that. And perhaps it will not be so bad, perhaps I am—silly," said Lucy, with a dolorous attempt at a smile.

"What does the doctor say?" Philip asked.

He was very sorry for her in all truth and sincerity, besides having a sense that it would be very good for him to be thus identified with her, and show himself as her chief comforter and support at this serious moment of her life.

Mrs. Ford came out from her parlour as she heard the conversation outside. She was Philip's relation too, and she had decided that nothing could be more suitable, if—— But like so many other good women she could not let well alone, and to Philip's great vexation here came out, adding her portly presence to the scene.

"The doctor is quite satisfied," said Mrs. Ford, "*quite* satisfied. He is going on as nicely as possible; you must help me to persuade Lucy, Philip, that she must not sit up as she is talking of doing. Why should she sit up? I shall be there to do whatever is wanted, and to call her if it should be necessary. At her age it is a killing thing to sit up all night."

"I have been begging her to let me stay and watch instead," said Philip; "a chair in your parlour would be all I should want, and I should be ready to run for the doctor."

"Oh, no, no," Lucy said.

Mrs. Ford wavered for a moment, thinking that a young man was much more fit for this duty than her respectable husband, but finally decided that it was not to be thought of, remembering Mr. Trevor's dislike to Philip; and then the bell was heard to ring, and Lucy ran upstairs anxiously. Mrs. Ford's parting words, however, were very encouraging.

"Don't you take any notice," she said, "but come and see her, whether you see him or not. He will go some day or other, that's certain, in one of these fits."

"Poor little Lucy!" Philip said.

"Yes, it is true, it will be sad for her," said Mrs. Ford, not half sure of what she was saying; "but yet Lucy will have a great deal to be thankful for, whatever happens," she added, as she again bade him good-night.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SIGNING OF THE WILL.

After this alarm, however, Mr. Trevor got better, and there was an interval of calm. Life resumed its usual routine, and all went on as before. During this interval, Frank St. Clair became Mr. Trevor's constant visitor. He saw the old man almost every day, and there can be no doubt that he entertained and amused him much. Old Trevor even went so far as to talk to him about the will, that all-important document, which was the object of his existence—not, indeed, of its actual composition, but of its existence as a mysterious authority which was to guide the steps of his successors for years. They had a great many most interesting conversations about wills. Frank was not a great lawyer, but yet he could remember some cases which had made a noise in their day, and some which had kept families in great commotion and trouble without making much noise in the world; and he took a somewhat malicious pleasure in telling his new acquaintance alarming stories of wills that had been lost, then found again to the confusion of every rational arrangement; and of wills that had been suppressed, and of some which no one had paid any attention to, setting aside their stipulations entirely, almost before the testator was cold in his grave. This was very startling to old Trevor. He inquired into it with a wonderful look of anxiety on his face. There was one will, in particular, of which his informant told him, with malicious calm, in which there was question of a house which the testator had built for his daughter,

and which he left to her under the condition that it should never be let or sold, but remain a home for her and her children for ever. What had happened? —the house had been let directly, the daughter not finding it convenient to live there; and it was now about to be sold. Yes, the will was perfectly sound, not contested by any-one; had been proved in due form, and administered to, and all formalities fulfilled —except in this important particular of carrying it out. Old Trevor's throat grew dry as he listened, the colour went out of his face.

"But—but—but—" he said, "was it allowed—was it permitted? Why wasn't it put a stop to? You must be making a mistake. Nobody can go against a will. A will! You forget what you're saying—a will is part of the law."

"Who was to put a stop to it?" said St. Clair calmly. "Who was to interfere? There were several brothers and sisters, and none of them wanted the house to stand empty though the father so willed it. Whose business was it to stand up for the will? There was no one to interfere."

"That is the most wonderful thing I ever heard in my life. The most wonderful thing!" said the old man, stammering and stumbling. "I cannot understand it. A will—and they paid no attention to it. I never heard of such a thing in my life."

"Oh! I have heard of a great many such things," said St. Clair, and he gave a little sketch—which, indeed, was interesting—of careful testaments set aside by the law, or made null by some trifling omission, or solemnly ignored by the very heirs they appointed. It was a cruel joke. Poor old Trevor did not get over it

for a long time. He sat and thought of it all the rest of the day. Who was to interfere? who was to make sure that anybody would do as he had ordained—would take upon them the trouble of superintending all Lucy's actions, and following out his code? He had Ford up when St. Clair left, and talked to him long on the subject, not betraying his fears, but cunningly endeavouring to pledge him, over and over, to the carrying out of his views. "You would not see my will neglected after I'm gone? If the others should be careless, or refuse the trouble, you'd always see justice done, Ford? I am sure I can trust in you whatever happens," the old man said.

"The best thing to do is to get the will signed, and sealed and delivered," said Ford, "that is the first way of making it sure. So long as you are adding a little bit every day, you can never be certain. Yes, yes! you may trust in me, Mr. Trevor. I would never dare to go against a dead person's will. I'd expect to be haunted every night of my life. You may trust in me; but I can't answer for others. I have charge of half of the time, no more. I can't answer for others; —Lady Randolph will pay little attention to me."

"Lady Randolph will pay attention to her own interests," said the old man.

"Ah! that she will," cried Ford with energy. There was much more meaning in the tone than in the words; and the inference was not agreeable to old Trevor, who retired within himself, and sat for the rest of the afternoon with a very serious face ruminating how to invent safeguards for the will, which, however, he would not sign, as Ford suggested. "There's something more I want to put in," the old man said pettishly. "I'll

try to wind it all up to-morrow." But as a matter of fact, he did not want to wind it all up, or conclude the document. When he did so, his occupation would be gone. It would be the conclusion of all things. With a natural shrinking he thrust this last action from him, notwithstanding the composure with which he had long regarded his own death as something necessary to the fulfilment of his intentions. But he did not feel disposed to put his final seal to it, and dismiss himself out of the world with a stroke of his pen. To-morrow was soon enough. When Lucy returned from school, she found him shivering by the fire. It was a cold day, but he was chilled by more than the weather; chilled in his vivacious spirit, which had done more to keep him warm than his good fire, or warmly lined dressing-gown. "No, I am not ill," he said, in answer to her inquiries, "not at all poorly, only low, Lucy. If you and the rest should throw me overboard after I am gone! if it should turn out that I have taken all this trouble for nothing: thinking of you night and day, and planning for your good and your happiness. If it should be all for nothing, Lucy!"

"But how could that be," said Lucy with her usual calm, "when you have been so particular—when you have written it all down?"

"Yes, I have written in all down," he said, "and it can't come to nothing, if you will be a good girl, and take care that all your old father's wishes are carried out."

"Papa, I promise you, all you have arranged about me, and all your wishes for me, shall be carried out," said Lucy with a very slight emphasis upon the pronoun, which indicated a mental reservation; but her

father did not notice this. His voice already enfeebled took a coaxing, beseeching tone.

"I'll not fear anything, I'll try not to fear anything, if you'll give me your promise. Give me your promise, Lucy," he said, and Lucy repeated with more effusion, when she saw the feverish uneasiness in which he was, the promise she had already made.

"Except about Jock," she said within herself; but even if she had said it aloud her father's thoughts were too much bent on the general question to have remarked this. Ford, who was very anxious too, beckoned to her from behind the screen, and whispered, "Get him to sign it, ask him to sign it!" with the most energetic gesticulations; but how could Lucy press such a request upon her father? They were all anxious in the house that evening, and Mrs. Ford sat up all night, and her husband lay on the sofa in his clothes, fearing a midnight summons; but it was not till the next evening that the blow came. When their anxiety had been softened, and their precautions forgotten, the loud jar and tinkle of the bell once more woke little Jock in his little bed, and Ford from his comfortable slumbers; and this time it was no false alarm. Old Trevor was seized at last by the paralytic attack which had been hovering over him for some time. Ford going hastily for the doctor caught a bronchitis which kept him in bed for a week (just, his wife said, like a man—when he is most wanted), but the old man had his death-stroke. The house changed all at once, as sudden and dangerous illness always changes the abode it dwells in. All thought, all consideration were merged in the sick-room. For the first few days not even the affairs which he had left un-

settled were thought of. The poor chilly blue and white drawing-room in which he had spent his days, stood vacant, colder and more commonplace than ever, yet with a pathos in its nakedness. The blotting-book, with the big blue folio projecting on every side, still lay on the writing-table where it had lain so long; but nobody touched it except the housemaid who dusted it daily, and was often tempted to take the sheaf of untidy papers to light her fire. What would it have mattered if she had lighted her fire with them? The work upon which the old man had spent so much of his fading life was of little importance now. No one thought of it except Ford, who at the worst of his bronchitis mourned over the uncompleted document.

"Will he ever come to himself, Doctor?" Will he ever have the use of his faculties?" he moaned; but even this no one could tell.

The old man lay for more than a week in this state of unconsciousness; but after a time began to give faint indications of returning intelligence. He could not move nor speak, but his eyes regained a gleam of meaning, and very awful it was to see this re-awakening, and to guess at the desires and feelings that awoke dimly, coursing like lights and shadows, a dumb language upon his countenance. One night Lucy felt that his eyes were fixed upon her with more meaning than before, and the three anxious people gathered round the bed, questioning and consulting each other. He was like a prisoner, making faint half-distinguishable gestures beyond the bars of his prison, questions on which deliverance might depend, but which the watchers could not understand. Presently the efforts increased, the powerless ashy old hand which lay on

the coverlet, all the fingers in a helpless heap together, began to flicker in vague movement. Old Trevor's eyes had not been remarkable for any force of expression, for nothing indeed, save for the keenness of his seeing when he was well. They had been small and sharp, and of a reddish grey, with puckered eyelids, making them smaller than they were by nature. Now they seemed to stand out enlarged and clear, and full of a spiritual force, which was partly weakness and partly the feverish dumb impotence of a desire to which he could not give words. They all gathered closely round, as anxious and not less helpless than he. Lucy in her inexperience was driven desperate by this crisis. She knelt down by the bedside, speaking to him wildly, clasping her hands, and beseeching, "What is it? What is it? Oh, papa, what is it? Try and speak to me," she cried. This hopeless kind of interrogation went on for some time without any result, and they had all subsided again into the quietness of despair, when Lucy was suddenly enlighted by a movement of the old man's crumpled fingers, which he had managed to curve as if holding a pen. "He wants to write," she said, hurrying to find a pencil and paper, but these were rejected by an indignant gleam from the sufferer's eyes.

"It is pen and ink he wants," Lucy cried in desperation, yet tidy still; "dear papa, this will be easier, and it will not make stains: not that! Oh, what is it, then, you want? what is it he wants? can no one guess what it is?"

"It is of no use," said Ford; "he wants to write, but he can't, that's the whole matter; he has something to tell us, but he can't. It's the will, he has

never signed the will. Doctor, is he fit? would it be any good?"

The doctor had just come in, and stood shaking his head.

"Let him try," he said; "I suppose it can't do any harm, at least."

They thought they saw a softening of satisfaction in the patient's eyes, and Ford ran to get the papers, while they all gathered round, more like conspirators about to drag some forced concession from the dying, than anxious attendants seeking every means of satisfying a last desire. Then the old man's lips began to move. To his own consciousness he was evidently demanding something, struggling, with his eyes almost bursting from his head. They raised him up, following the imperative demand made by his face, and put the familiar document before him. His eyes (they thought) brightened at the sight of it; something like a smile came upon his ashy and somewhat contorted countenance. Though he was supported like a log of wood by Ford and Lucy, yet his skeleton figure, raised erect, took an air of dominance and energy. He had reigned in a fantastic visionary world where everything was subject to his will when he had composed these papers, and something of the same sentiment was in his aspect now. He clutched the pen in that bundle of bony fingers, then gave a glance of triumph round upon them all, and dabbed down the pen upon the paper with that skeleton hand.

What had he put there? a blot, nothing more.

A perception that he had not succeeded, a gleam of anguish went over his face; and then grasping the pen with increased energy in a wildly renewed effort,

he brought it down in a sea of ink, with a helpless daub as unmeaning as before. Then a groan came from his shrivelled bosom; he let the pen drop, and dropped like a log of wood.

The doctor had been standing by all the time, shaking his head; he interfered now in a passionless easy tone.

"There is no harm done," he said; "it could not have stood had he succeeded; nobody could have said his mind was in a fit state. Don't take it away, but wait and have patience. After this he may mend, most likely he will mend."

"Papa," cried Lucy, close to his ear, "do you hear that? You are not to mind, you will still be able to do it. Do you hear, papa?"

The old man made no response. Another groan, the very utterance of despair, broke from him. His eyes closed, his bony fingers fell on the coverlet, a collection of contracted joints, helpless as they had been before. He made a half fling of intended movement, without strength to carry his intention out. What he wanted was evidently to turn his head from the light, to turn the countenance to the wall; what image is there which speaks more eloquently of that despair which is moral death? The spectators stood by mournfully, with but half a sense of the full tragic meaning of the scene, yet vaguely impressed by it, feeling something of the horrible sense of failure, tragical, yet stupefying, which invaded all the half-awakened faculties of the chief sufferer. Even now they were but half aware of it, Lucy looking on with infinite pity and awe, struggling to assure the half-deafened ear that it did not matter, that all would be well, while the Fords,

quickened by self-interest, realised with a dull dismay the loss, the misfortune, which would affect themselves. But the real tragedy remained concentrated in that worn-out old body and imprisoned soul. How much of his life was in those elaborate plans and settlements! and he had failed at the last moment to give them the necessary warrant. The old man closed his eyes, and, so far as his will went, flung himself away from the light, turned his face to the wall, yet could not do even that, in the prostration of all his powers.

"If he can sleep, he may wake—himself;" the doctor said, doubtfully. It was just as likely he might not wake at all. But the light was carefully shaded, and the nurse, who had no anxiety to disturb her, and the calm of professional serenity to keep her composed, took the place of the other watchers. The doctor, who was interested in an unusual "case," and who was a young man, as yet without much practice, offered to Ford, who was excited and worn out, to remain, that there might be help at hand, and a professional guarantee in case of any new incident; and this being settled, sent all the other watchers to rest. Lucy, though she would fain have stayed with her father, fell asleep, how could she help it? after so many broken nights, the moment her young head touched the pillow. The Fords were more wakeful, and retired, more to consult together than to sleep, talking in whispers, though nothing they could have said on the upper floor could have reached the sick-room, and full of alarm and trouble as to the consequences of the failure. Mrs. Ford, for her part, employed this moment of relief chiefly in crying and mourning over "their luck," which no doubt would be enough to secure that the old man

should die without signing the charter of their privileges. But even the whispering and weeping came to an end at last, and all was still in the house, where the doctor occupied the forsaken drawing-room, so bare and chilly, and the nurse watched in the silent chamber, and old Trevor lay between life and death.

The only one of the family who could not rest was little Jock. Who does not remember that sleeplessness of childhood which is more desolate and more restless in its contradiction of nature, and innocent vacancy, than even the maturer misery of wakeful nights all rustling full of care and thought? Jock had been waked out of his first sleep by the muffled coming and going, the sound of subdued steps and whispering voices. He had heard a great deal which "the family" are never supposed to hear. He heard the doctor's whispered conference with the Fords in the passage. "I can say nothing with certainty," the doctor had said; "if he can sleep he may be himself in the morning, and able to attend to his business." "Or he may pass away," Mr. Ford had said; "at the dawning. That is the time when they get their release." Pass away! Jock wondered, with a shiver, what it meant. Visions flitted before his eyes of his father's figure, like that of Time, which he had seen on an old almanack, his grey locks flying behind him, and a long staff in his hand. Where would he go to in the dark, or at the dawning? Jock tried to turn his face to the wall, away from the long mysterious window, which attracted his gaze in spite of himself, and through which he almost expected to see some weird passenger step forth. His door was open, as he liked to have it, and the faint light shining through it usually afforded him

a little consolation; but on this particular night, among its vague horrors, this too became a dangerous opening, through which some terrible figure might suddenly appear. He was obliged to turn round again, to keep both door and window within sight. And all kinds of visions flitted before him. The noise of a waggon far off on the road, across the Common, suggested the dead-cart of the Plague, rolling heavily, stopping here and there to take up its horrible load. He seemed to hear the bell tinkle, the heavy tramp of the attendants; and at any moment the child felt the door might be pushed open, and some one come to take him away, and toss him among all those confused limbs and dead faces. Or was it his father whom they would seize as he "passed away," with his grey hair blown about by the winds? Then Jock's imagination changed the theme, and he was in the valley of death with Christian, hearing all those horrible whispers on every side, and looking into the mouth of Hell. He did everything he could to get to sleep; he counted, as far as his knowledge of numbers would go, and said to himself all the poetry he knew; but all was of no avail. When he began to see the walls of his little room grow more distinct round him in a faint blueness, Jock was not encouraged by the prospect of daybreak. He thought of what Mr. Ford had said, and of the people who were "released" at the dawning, and he could not bear it any longer; he sprang from his bed, and rushed towards the light in the passage, a light which was more cheerful, more re-assuring, than the pale beginning of the day. The door of his father's room was ajar, and the light was burning within, and a faint glimmer as of firelight. Jock crept in, trembling and

shivering, in his little white night-gown, like an incarnation of the white cold tremulous infantile day.

Jock stole in very quietly, feeling protection in the warmth and stillness; he edged his way in the shadow of the curtains, drawing instinctively towards the fire; but afraid of being seen and turned out again. He was afraid, yet he was very curious and anxious about the bed, in which he knew his father was lying. The curtains at the head were thrown back, twisted and pushed out of the way to give more air; and there the pale grey head of the old man revealed itself on the pillow, lying motionless. Jock stopped short with a sob in his throat, and terror, too intense for expression, in his soul. His father had not "passed away;" but whether he was alive or dead, Jock could not tell. The nurse was dozing in the stillness, in her chair by the fire. The day was rising, penetrating, even here, between the closed curtains, with that chill all-pervading blueness; it was the moment when every watch relaxes, when the strain is relieved, and weariness makes itself felt. Not a sound was to be heard, except now and then the ashes falling, and the breathing of the strange woman in the big chair, who was almost as alarming an object to Jock, as his father. The child stood shivering, his mouth half open to cry, the sob arrested by pure terror, in his throat.

And whether it was that the sob escaped unawares, or that some sense of the presence of another living creature in the room, that subtle consciousness with which the atmosphere seems to penetrate itself, of a living and thinking soul in it—reached the old man on the bed it is impossible to say: but while Jock stood watching his father suddenly opened his eyes, and

turned, ever so little, yet turned towards him. Jock was not aware that the old man had been up to this time unable to move, but his imagination was excited, and the instantaneous revival into awful life of the mute figure on the bed, produced the strangest effect upon him. A wild scream burst from his lips, he ran out to the stairs crying wildly. "He has got his release," Jock cried, not knowing what he said.

The cry woke the nurse, brought the young doctor, drowsy and confused, from the next room, and Lucy flying, all her fair locks about her shoulders, downstairs. The Fords followed more slowly, the very maids were roused. But the release which the old man had got was not of the kind anticipated by his companions. He was liberated from the disease, which nobody had hoped; he had recovered his speech, though his utterance was greatly changed and impeded; and, though one side remained powerless, he retained the use of the other. He was even so much himself as to chuckle feebly, but quietly, when the doctor returned a few hours later, and pronounced him to be almost miraculously better. "I'll trouble you, Doctor, to witness it," the old man said, babbling over the words, and looking with his enlarged but dimmed eyes at the papers by his bedside. "I've got something to add; but I'll not put off and cheat myself, not put off and cheat myself again." This they thought was what he said. And thus the will got signed at last.

He lingered for some time after, continually endeavouring to resume his old work, and now and then becoming sufficiently articulate to give full evidence of the perfect possession of his faculties. But within a week a third seizure carried off the old man without

power of protest or remedy. His unexpressed intentions died with him, but the words "I've something to add," were the last he said.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE READING OF THE WILL.

LITTLE Jock Trevor had never been a favourite with his father; there had been between them nothing of the caressing intercourse which generally exists between a very old father and a young child. He was not the pet or plaything of the old man, who had remorselessly sentenced him to as complete a separation as was possible from his sister. But, nevertheless, Jock had grown up literally at his father's feet, and the world became suddenly very vacant and strange to him when the familiar figure was withdrawn. The little fellow did not understand life without this central point of stability and power in it; he had been used to the old man's presence, to the half-comprehended talks which went on over his head, and to the back-ground of that mysterious aged life filled with so many things beyond Jock's understanding, which yet afforded depth and fulness to his strange perceptions of the mysterious world. He and his books had lain in the foreground in a varying atmosphere of visions, but behind had always been that pervading consciousness of something more important, a dimly apprehended world of fact. So it happened that of all the household at the Terrace, it was little Jock who felt his father's death the most deeply; his nerves had suffered from contact with that still more mysterious dying, which he could not understand.

He could not get out of his childish mind the impression made upon him by the sudden opening, in the dreadful silence, of his father's eyes. He who had spent all his life alone, could be left alone no longer; he followed Lucy about wherever she went, holding tightly by her hand. There was no one to interfere, or to prevent the hitherto neglected child from becoming the chief interest of the house. He felt the loss far more, though it was to his immediate advantage, than Lucy did, who cried a little when she woke every morning at the recollection, but put on her crape with a certain melancholy pleasure in the completeness and "depth" of her mourning. Mrs. Ford, though she cried too, could not but admire and wonder at these black dresses covered with crape, which she felt it would have been a pleasure to old Mr. Trevor to see, so "deep" were they, and showing so much respect. It was almost like widows' mourning, she declared, deeper far than that which ordinary mourners wore for a parent: but then, when you considered what Lucy had lost—and gained!

But little Jock got no satisfaction out of his hatband; he found no comfort in anything but Lucy's hand, which he clung to as his only anchor. He went to the funeral holding fast by her, half hidden in her dress. The bystanders were deeply touched by the sight of the young girl so composed and firm, and the poor little boy with his scared eyes. Many an eye was bent upon them, as they stood by the grave, two creatures so close together that they looked but one, yet, as all the spectators knew, so far apart in reality, so unlike each other in their prospects. Was it possible that she, a girl, was to have everything and he nothing

people asked each other with indignation? and notwithstanding the fact that all Farafield knew it was Lucilla Rainy's money which made Lucy Trevor an heiress, still it would have shocked public opinion less if the boy had inherited the larger share, though he was, as old Trevor was so feelingly aware, an insult to Lucilla Rainy. So strong is prejudice that the moral sense of the population would have felt it less had poor Lucilla's money been appropriated to make an "eldest son" of her successor's child.

The funeral had attracted a great following. The shop-keeping class, many of whom had received their education at old John Trevor's school, and the upper class, of whom several had received lessons from him, and who were in general powerfully moved by the acquisition into their ranks of a new and unknown personage, a great heiress, who henceforward, they made no doubt, would take her fitting place among them—filled the church and churchyard, and looked on at the ceremony, if not with much sympathy, yet with great interest. Almost everybody, indeed, was there. A carriage from the Hall followed the procession from the house, and Lady Randolph herself arrived from the station before the service in the church was over, and followed to the grave, though no one had expected such a compliment, carefully dressed in black, and with a gauze veil which, Mrs. Ford remarked, was almost as "deep" as crape. It gave Lucy a certain satisfaction to see, though it was through her tears, the crowds of people; they were paying him due respect. In that, as in everything, respect was his due, and he was getting it in full measure. She felt that he himself would have been pleased had he been there; and

it was very difficult to believe that somehow or other he was not there, seeing how everything went on. He would have chuckled over it had he seen it; he would have felt the compliment; and Lucy felt it. When, however, she saw how large a party accompanied her home after all was over, and understood that she was to go into the drawing-room and hear the will read among all these people, Lucy could not but feel that it was very "trying," as Mrs. Ford said; but yet she did it dutifully, as she was told, not feeling that there was any choice left her, or that she could refuse to do whatever was thought necessary. It was difficult to disengage herself from Jock, and persuade him that it was best for him to lie down on the sofa downstairs and allow himself to be read to. He consented at last, and then Lucy felt that the loss of his small hand clinging to hers took away a great part of her strength; but she was not a girl who stopped to consider what she could or could not do. She did what she was told, always a more satisfactory rule.

There were a great many people in the room when Lucy went in, leaning, much against her will, on Mrs. Ford's arm. She was quite able to walk by herself, and did not indeed like the careful and somewhat fussy support which was given her, but she put up with it looking straight before her, not to meet the compassionating looks which Mrs. Ford thought it part of her *rôle* to address to the orphan. "Yes, my darling, it's a great trial for you," Mrs. Ford kept saying, "a great trial, my love, but you will be supported if you are brave; and I am sure you will be brave, my dearie-dear;" now it was not Mrs. Ford's custom to call Lucy her darling and her dearie-dear, which confused the

girl; but all the same she resigned herself. Some one rose when she came in and enfolded her in a large embrace. Floods of black silk, and waves of perfume, seemed to pass over her head, and then she emerged, catching her breath a little. This was Lady Randolph, who was large, but handsome and comely, and filled up a great part of what space there was to spare. Seated at a little distance was Mrs. Stone who showed her more delicate sense of Lucy's "trial," only by giving her a look in which pity was tempered by encouragement, and a slight friendly nod. Besides these ladies, whom she identified at once, there seemed to Lucy to be a cloud of men. All were silent, looking at her as she came in: all were in black, black gloves making themselves painfully apparent on the hands of the ladies. It was before the time when black paws became the fashion on all occasions. Even Mr. Ford wore black gloves; it was an important part of the general "respect." After a while, even the men became comprehensible to Lucy. There was Mr. Rushton, the town clerk, and Mr. Chervil from London, and another lawyer with a large blue bag, whom she did not know. Seated near these gentlemen, with an amiable patronising air which seemed to say "I am very glad to countenance you, but what can *I* have to do here?" was, to the surprise of most of the company, the Rector, who had so placed himself that, though he did not know what he was wanted for, he had the look of being a kind of chairman of the "assembly;" while near the door, sitting on the edge of his seat, holding his hat in one hand, and brushing it carefully with the other, was Mr. Williamson, the Dissenting Minister. Mr. Williamson did not at all know how he was to be received

in this company. They were all "Church people," even the Fords, though they had begun on other principles. And John Trevor had just been buried, though he was a staunch old Nonconformist, with the ceremonials of the church. Mr. Williamson did not know whether to be defiant or conciliatory. Sometimes he smiled at his hat, smoothing it round and round. The hat-band had been taken off, and carefully folded by to take home to his wife; in this point he had taken example by the Rector, who was very well used to the sort of thing, and did not like anything to be wasted. Clergymen's wives are very well aware that hat-bands are always made of the richest of silk.

Mr. Rushton made a little explanation, informing the company that their late worthy friend had wished them all to hear at least one part of his will, and to accept a trust which it had been his great desire to confide to them: and then the reading began. It is always a curious ceremonial and often affords scope for the development of strong emotions; but in this case it was not so. There was great curiosity on the subject, but no anxiety. Once indeed, when the testator requested each person present to accept fifty pounds for a ring, a little involuntary liveliness, a rustle of attention, ran through the room. Though Lady Randolph, and Mrs. Stone, the Rector and Mr. Williamson, had nothing in common with each other, they exchanged an involuntary glance, and the corners of their mouths rose perceptibly. Fifty pounds is not much, but there are few people who would not be pleased to have such a little present made to them quite unexpectedly. Their mouths relaxed a little, there was a softening of expression, and it would be

impossible to deny that Mr. Trevor rose several degrees in their opinion. But beyond this little wave of pleasurable sentiment there was no emotion called for, except surprise.

The will took a great deal of reading; it was a very long document, or succession of documents, for the very enumeration of the codicils took some time. These were all read in a clear monotonous voice which brought a softening haze of drowsiness on the assembly. Perhaps no individual present fully realized all the provisoes. Some of them were hid in technical language, some confused by being mixed up with long details of the money and property bequeathed. The first and chief body of the will, which bequeathed three thousand pounds in the funds to the testator's son, and all the rest of his property to his daughter, "as the only heir and descendant of her mother, my wife Lucilla Rainy, through whom the property came," was brief and succinct enough. It had none of the rambling elaboration of the later additions. When John Trevor had executed it he had been still a strong man, very energetic in the management of his own affairs, but not dominated by any master idea. It was plain justice, as he apprehended it, but he had not begun to frame the theories which filled his later days. As the will was read, the door opened and Philip Rainy came into the room. There was a slight general stir, a common movement, very faint, but universal, in disapproval of the entrance of any intruder. Everyone of those people, with no right that they knew of to be there, felt a thrill of indignation go over them at the sight of a stranger. What business had he to be present? But after the stir there was an equally

general pause. Lady Randolph, the only one who did not know Philip, looked at the lawyers. But the lawyers made no response. The voice of the reader went on again, the hearers fell into their previous half drowse of attention; and the young man who had nothing at all to do with it, but who was the nearest relation of the orphans, stood in his black clothes leaning against the door. And there was not any drowse about Philip; he listened, and he made out every word.

When the codicils approached a conclusion, the drowse disappeared from the company in general. It began to introduce their own names, which is a sure way of interesting people; when the clause was read which described the future course of Lucy's life, how it was to be spent and where, there was a little stir among those who were immediately concerned. Lady Randolph sat up more erect in her chair, and held her head higher with a complacence and sense of importance which it would have been impossible to express more delicately; the Fords, less well-bred, looked at each other, and Mrs. Ford began to cry. The spectators all listened keenly; their surprise and their curiosity rose to a higher heat. Then came the appointment of the marriage committee, at which the little thrill which had been visible in the others communicated itself to all the company. Each individual sat up, straightened his or her back, holding up their several heads, and listened with a sense of importance and satisfaction, mingled with, in some of them, a perception of the ludicrous side of the arrangement; and after this there was little more.

During the whole of the proceedings Philip Rainy, undisturbed and undisturbing, stood up leaning against

the door. It was all new to him, and much of it was far from agreeable; but he made no sign. He had no business to be there—all these strangers, he could not but feel with a little bitterness, had come by invitation and had a right to the place they occupied; but he had nothing to do with it. Nevertheless it was something, it was a tacit acknowledgment that he had something to do with it that no one remonstrated or took any notice of his presence. And he took no notice, made no remark; but listened with the keenest attention. Yes, there was one on whom none of the provisions were lost, who never felt drowsy, but listened with his very ears tingling, and his mind concentrated upon what he heard; he missed nothing, the technical wording did not confuse him, each new particular stirred up his thoughts to a rapidity and energy of action such as he had never before been conscious of. He stood betraying nothing, looking at all the complacent assembly, which regarded him as an outsider; and as each new detail was read, swiftly, silently, opposed to it in his mind a system of counter-action. All these people, with their little glow and sense of satisfaction, were to him like so many lay-figures round the table; dream-people not worth taking into consideration. But on the other side he seemed to see old Trevor chuckling and waving a visionary hand at him. "There is not a loop-hole to let you in," the old ghost seemed to say; and Philip ground his teeth, and said within him, "We shall see."

As for the members of the marriage committee, those of them who were not previously aware of the charge committed to them, were filled with amaze, and showed it each in his or her own way. Mrs. Stone

and the Fords sat fast, with a half smile on their faces, by way of showing that to them the idea was already familiar. But Lady Randolph was considerably disturbed. She pushed back her chair a little, and looked round with a certain dismay, her eyes opening wider, her lips parting, her breast heaving with a half sigh, half sob of surprise. "All these people!" she seemed to say, giving a second critical look round. The Rector was still more surprised—if that were possible; but he took his surprise in a genial way. He began to laugh gently, under his breath as it were. He was not a relation, nor even a friend, and he was not called upon to be very serious on the death of old Trevor. He laughed; but quietly and decorously, only enough to express a certain puzzled consternation and sense of absurdity, yet consciousness that old Trevor had shown a certain good sense in choosing himself. As for Mr. Williamson, he was thunderstruck; he left off smoothing his hat; he too looked round him bewildered, as if for instruction. How had his name been placed on such a list? and he ended with a furtive glance at the Rector, who was the member of the company who interested him most. When the voice of the reader stopped there was a curious momentary pause.

"This is a very astonishing arrangement," said the Rector, rubbing his hands; "an extremely strange arrangement. I don't see how we are to carry it out. Don't you think there is something a little odd—I mean, something eccentric? there always was a certain eccentricity, eh? don't you know? in the character—"

"Our departed friend," said Mr. Williamson, clear-

ing his throat; "had full possession of his faculties. I saw him the day before his seizure; his intellects were as clear, I am ready to give my testimony anywhere—as clear—as yours, Sir, or mine."

It was not very distinctly indicated to whom this was addressed; the Rector cast a slight glance at the speaker, as though he might have shrugged his shoulders; but he was too polite to do so. "But," he went on, as though he had not been interrupted. "But—this is too extraordinary; I scarcely knew Mr. Trevor; why he should make me one of the guardians of his daughter in such an important matter I cannot understand; and associate me with—" he paused again, and then gave another glance round; "so many others—perhaps better qualified."

"If Dr. Beresford means me—" Mr. Williamson began with a flush on his face.

"I mean no one in particular. I mean everybody—I mean that the whole idea is preposterous—why," said the Rector, bursting into a little laugh, "it is like an old play; it's like an invention in a romance—it is like—"

"Oh-h!" said Mrs. Ford, drawing in her breath. She had not intended to speak in such fine company; but this was too much for her—and it had always been believed by those who knew her most intimately that she was still a Dissenter in her heart. "Oh-h!" she said, with a little shudder. "When you consider that poor Mr. Trevor was carried out of this house, feet foremost, this very day—and before the first night that folks should laugh—"

The Rector got very red. "I beg your pardon," he said sharply, not with an apologetic voice. Mr.

Williamson began once more to smooth his hat. There was in him a suppressed smile from the sole of his shoe to the top of his head: and the Rector was aware of it, but could not take any notice, which discomposed that dignified clergyman more than if it had been a greater matter.

Mrs. Stone here interfered; naturally her sympathies were all with the Church; but she liked, at the same time, to show her superior acquaintance with the testator's wishes. "If you will allow me," she said, "I had the advantage of hearing from poor Mr. Trevor himself what he meant. He did not wish to deprive his dear daughter of the advice of one who would be her spiritual instructor. He was—not a Churchman: but he was a man of great judgment. He considered that the Rector had a right to a voice in a matter so important. But," said Mrs. Stone, suddenly, seeing Lady Randolph eager to interfere, "perhaps this is scarcely a moment to discuss the matter? And in the presence of—"

"Not at all the moment," said Lady Randolph, rising up and shaking out her flowing skirts. "These gentlemen must all be aware that Miss Trevor, in the meantime, is my first thought. Our presence is no longer necessary, I believe. My dear?" the great lady said, offering her arm to Lucy, who was thankful to be released. All the men stood up, the Rector still red, and Mr. Williamson still smoothing his hat. The departure of the ladies had the air of a procession. Lucy was very timid and very sick at heart, longing to escape, to rest, to cry, and then to prepare herself quietly for whatever change might be coming; but she had no need of Lady Randolph's arm. Even when

the heart is breaking, a mourner may be quite able to walk; and Lucy was not heart-broken, only longing to cry a little, and give vent to her natural gentle sorrow for her poor old father. But Lady Randolph drew the girl's hand within her arm, and held it there with her other hand, and whispered, "Lean upon me, my poor child." Lucy did not lean, feeling no need of support, but otherwise obeyed. Philip Rainy opened the door for the darkly-clothed procession. He too thought it right to assert himself. "I should like to see you, Lucy," he said, "afterwards," taking no notice of the great lady, "about Jock." The name, the suggestion gave Lucy a shock of awakening. She stopped short, to Lady Randolph's surprise and alarm, and turned round suddenly, withdrawing her hand from the soft constraint of that pressure upon it. They all paused, looking at her, almost in as great surprise as if something inanimate had detached itself from the wall, and taken an independent step.

"Please, Mr. Rushton," Lucy said timidly, but clearly, "there is one thing I want to say. I will do everything—everything that papa wishes:—but about Jock—"

"About Jock?" they all came a little nearer, looking at her. Mrs. Stone put forth a hand to pat the girl's shoulder soothingly, murmuring, "Yes, dear—yes, my love, another time," with amiable moderation. But Lady Randolph would not permit any interference. She took her charge's hand again. "My dear," she said, "all these arrangements can be settled afterwards by your friends." Lady Randolph had no idea what was meant by Jock.

"But I must settle this first," Lucy said. She was

very pale, and very slight and girlish, looking like a shadow in her black clothes: but there was no mistaking her quiet determination. She stood quite still, making no fuss, with her eyes fixed upon the two lawyers. "I will do everything," she repeated, "only not about Jock."

"That is what I am here for, Lucy," said Philip Rainy. "I am your nearest relative. It is I who ought to have the care of Jock."

At this point all turned their attention to Philip with sudden intelligence in their faces, and some with alarm. The nearest relative! Lucy, however, did nothing to confirm the position which Philip felt it expedient thus strongly, and, at once, to assert. She looked at him with a faint smile, and shook her head.

"He has nobody really belonging to him but me. Mr. Rushton, please—I will do everything else—but I cannot give up Jock."

"We'll see about it. We'll see about it, Lucy," Mr. Rushton said.

And then Lady Randolph, a little impatient, resumed her lead. "I cannot let you exert yourself so much," she said with peremptory tenderness. "I must take you away; all this will be settled quite comfortably; but my first thought is for you. I must not let you overexert yourself. Lean upon me, my poor child!"

And thus, at last, the black-robed procession filed away.

CHAPTER XVII.

GUARDIANS.

THE ladies went away, the men remained behind: most of them took their seats again with evident relief. However agreeable the two halves of humanity may be to each other in certain circumstances, it is a relief to both to get rid of each other when there is business on hand. The mutual contempt they have for each other's modes of acting impedes hearty co-operation, and the presence of one interferes with the other's freedom. The men took their seats and drew a long breath of relief, all but Philip, the unauthorised member of the party, who felt that with Lucy his only real right to be here at all was gone.

"Well!" said the Rector, intensifying that sigh of relief into a kind of snort of satisfaction, "now that we may speak freely, Rushton, you don't expect that rubbish would bear the brunt of an English court of law? It is all romancing; the old fellow must have been laughing at you in his sleeve. Seven trustees to decide whom the girl is to marry! His mind must have been gone: and you can't imagine for a moment that this is a thing which can be carried out."

"I don't see why," said Mr. Rushton, calmly; "more absurd things have been carried out. He wants his girl to be looked after. She will have half the fortune-hunters in England after her, like flies after a honey-pot."

All the men assembled looked at the town-clerk; he was the only one among them who could possibly

have any interest in the question. The Rector appreciated this fact with unusual force; he had daughters only, whereas Raymond Rushton was a likely young fellow enough. They were all somewhat suspicious of each other, all except the personage who had read the documents, and took no part in the matter, and Mr. Chervil, a London attorney, with little time to spare, and not much interest in anything but the money, which was his trade.

"Of course there will be fortune-hunters after her. He ought," said the Rector, who was given to laying down the law, "to have appointed a couple of trustworthy guardians, as other people do, and left it in their hands. Such an arrangement as this, no one can help seeing, is positively absurd."

Here Ford cleared his throat expressively, with a sound which drew all eyes towards him. But the good man, having thus protested inarticulately, was shy, and shrank from speech. He retreated a step or two with involuntary precipitation. And the only defender old Trevor found was in Mr. Williamson, who nevertheless had no desire to pit himself against the Rector; he would have liked on the contrary to be liberal and friendly, and to show himself superior to all petty feeling; but he could not help taking a special interest in everything his clerical brother, who did not admit his brotherhood, did or said. Opposition or friendship, it might be either one or the other, but indifference could not be between them. Accordingly as soon as the Rector had said anything, Mr. Williamson was instantly moved to say the reverse.

"We must not forget," he said, putting down his hat on the floor, "that our late lamented friend was

carried out of this place only to-day. To call his arrangements absurd, so soon, is surely, if I may say so, not in good taste."

"Oh, as for good taste!" cried the Rector, imperatively, with a sneer upon his lips; but he stopped himself in time. He would not get into any altercation, he said to himself; it was bad enough to be confronted with Dissenters, to have one of these fanatics actually sitting down with him at the same table, but to suffer himself to be led into a controversy! "As for that," he said, "my mind is easy enough. But here is a very simple question—"

"Shall you serve, Doctor Beresford? or do you decline it?" Mr. Rushton said.

This was a question more simple still. The Rector turned round and stared at the other with a confused and bewildered countenance. This was not at all what he meant. He paused for a moment, and reflected before he made any answer; would he serve, or did he decline it? Very simple, but not so easy to answer; would he have a finger in the pie, or give it up altogether? would he accept the mysterious position, and keep the dear privilege of control, and the power of saying who was *not* to marry Lucy Trevor, though he cared little for Lucy Trevor? or would he show his sense of the folly of the arrangement by rejecting any share in it? It was, though so simple, a difficult question, much more difficult than to set down the old man, who was not a churchman, as a fool. It did not please him however to accept the latter alternative: he was a man who dearly liked to have a finger in every pie.

"Oh, ah! indeed!—yes, to be sure. That is how you put it," he said.

"Yes, that is the only way to put it," said Mr. Rushton; "we can't compel anyone to accept the charge, but we have a few names behind with which to fill up, should anyone object. My client was full of foresight," he added, with a smile, "he was very long-headed, wrong-headed too, if you like, sometimes, but sharp as a needle. He thought his little girl a great prize."

"And so she will be," said the Rector, almost with solemnity; and he was silent for a moment, as if in natural awe of Lucy's greatness; but within himself he was mentally vowing that, if Rushton tried to run his boy for such large stakes, he, the Rector, would take care that he did not have it all his own way. Dr. Beresford, though he was an excellent clergyman, was not above the use of slang now and then, nor was he too good for a resolution which had a little of the vindictive in it. "Must we be called together to be consulted?" he said, with a laugh; "there's something of the kind in an old play. Will the candidate appear before us, and state his qualifications." The Rector again permitted himself to laugh, but nobody responded. Mr. Rushton, though he condemned the will in private, had sufficient professional feeling to decline to join in any open ridicule of it, and Ford, who felt himself in the dignified attitude of a mourner, allowed nothing to disturb his seriousness. Mr. Williamson was smoothing his hat with disapproving gravity, polishing it heavily round and round, as though he found some carnal tendency in it which had to be repressed.

"In my opinion there is nothing to laugh at," he said; "it is a grave responsibility. The choice of a God-fearing, Christian man to be the guide of the young lady, under Providence, and the trustee, as it were, of a great fortune—"

"Oh, not so bad as that; we have not got to choose him, only to blackball him," said Mr. Rushton; "and if you think old Trevor intended that any husband should be the trustee of his daughter's fortune, that is a mistake, I assure you. She has more power in her hands than ever a girl had—even now before she is of age, she is allowed liberties—Ah!" Mr. Rushton stopped short; for Philip Rainy had stepped forward, with the evident intention of saying something. They all looked at Philip. He was well-known to everyone present—regarded favourably by the Rector, as one who had seen the evil of his ways, and with a grudge by Mr. Williamson as a deserter from the Nonconformist cause, and with careless friendliness by Mr. Rushton, as a man who was only a rising man, and to whom he was conscious of having himself given a helping hand. To Ford, Philip was a member of the family, who rather set himself above the family, and therefore was the object of certain restrained grudges, but yet was a Rainy after all; thus the feeling of the company about him was mingled. Nevertheless, when they suddenly turned upon him, and recalled themselves to a recollection of his presence and his position, and all that was in his favour, and the indications of nature, which pointed him out as so likely a candidate, they all instinctively forestalled the future, and on the spot blackballed Philip, who stood before them unconscious of his fate.

"I do not wish to intrude," he said; "though if anyone has a right to know about my cousins I have. I am their nearest relation. I am—" and here he put on a certain dignity, though the Rainys were not a noble race—"I believe the head of the family since my father's death. But what I want to say is this; if you, as his legal guardians, do not object, I should like to take charge of Jock."

("Who is Jock?" said the Rector, in an undertone.) There was no one to answer but Mr. Williamson, who replied in the same tone, without looking at him, "The little boy." It was the first distinct communication that had passed between them. Dr. Beresford looked at the Nonconformist with a humph of half angry carelessness and turned away; but yet he could not help it, he had distinctly realized the presence of the Minister of Bethesda, which was a great thorn in his side. On former occasions he had said, "I know nothing about that sort of people;" but that advantage was now taken from him. He had become acquainted with the man, though he was his natural enemy.

"Take charge of Jock?—with all my heart;" said the lawyer. "You could not do anything that would please me more; he has been one of our difficulties. Look here, Chervil, here is the very best thing that could happen. Mr. Rainy, a relation, a—a gentleman in the scholastic profession;" here he stopped, and made a little grimace. "There will be a moderate allowance for him," he continued, with a laugh; "all that is easy enough: but there's his sister to be taken into consideration, you know."

"If I have your consent, I think I can manage Lucy," said Philip, calmly. He spoke with great distinctness,

and he meant them all to understand him. It was as if a thunderbolt had been thrown in their midst: a young fellow like this, nobody in particular, to call the heiress Lucy! Mr. Rushton called her so himself, and so did Ford, and the Minister; but all at once such familiarity had come to sound profane. It was quite profane in young Rainy, a mere schoolmaster, to speak so familiarly of that golden girl. They all drew back with a distinct shiver. As for the Rector, he again ventured on a little laugh.

"You are a bold fellow, Rainy," he said. "To talk of a young lady whom we all respect so much, by her Christian name."

"I have known her all my life, doctor; we are cousins." There was no idea of this great respect then. "I will speak to her at once."

The way in which the matrimonial committee drew in their breath, made a distinct sound in the room. Speak to her, good heavens!—a schoolmaster—a nobody! "You will remember," said Ford, with solemnity; "that this is the day of her father's funeral. To speak to her—about any such matters—"

"What matters?" Philip knew very well what they meant; but he liked to play upon their apprehensions. "You may be sure," he said, with malicious gravity; "I shall say nothing to distress her. She knows me, and I think she has confidence in me."

"And you forget," said Mr. Chervil, who was cool, and had his wits about him, "that it's only about little Jock."

"To be sure, to be sure; it is not about anything very important," said the committee, in full accord, "it's only about little Jock."

And then they all laughed, but not with a very good grace. There was no fault at all to be found with him, an honest honourable rising young man—and the girl had no right to anything better; but what was the use of appointing a committee of seven to watch over this momentous event, if Lucy's fortune was to fall like a ripe apple from the tree into the mouth of Mr. Philip Rainy? The Rector who had thought the stipulations so absurd, and had asked, almost with indignation, whether anyone could ever hope to carry them out, even he looked with indignation at Philip. It was like cutting the ground from under their feet, settling the whole business before it had even begun. It was a thing not to be tolerated at all. There was not a word more said by anybody about the unnecessariness of Mr. Trevor's precautions after this specimen, as they all felt it, of the dangers that had to be gone through.

While this was going on upstairs, Lady Randolph led Lucy into Mrs. Ford's sitting-room, "as if it had been her own," that excellent woman said, though she was very willing on the whole that her parlour should be made use of, and indeed for long after took special care of the chair upon which Lady Randolph had sat down. Mrs. Ford and Mrs. Stone followed. There was a pause after they had all seated themselves, for these two other personages were somewhat jealous in their eagerness to hear every syllable that fell from Lady Randolph's lips, and Lady Randolph studiously ignored them. It was she who for the moment was mistress of the situation; she put Lucy tenderly upon the sofa, and drew a chair close to it.

"You are doing too much," she said; "after all the excitement and the grief you want rest, or we shall have you ill on our hands."

"That is what I am always telling her, my lady," said Mrs. Ford.

Mrs. Stone smiled. "Lucy will not get ill," she said, "her strength is intact; I don't think Lady Randolph need have any fear on that account."

But Mrs. Stone's interference was not relished by anyone. Lady Randolph glanced slightly at her, but took no notice; while Mrs. Ford was somewhat irritated that Lucy should be thought robust and able to bear a great sorrow without suffering. They were all very anxious to persuade the girl to "put up her feet," and take care of herself.

"A change, an entire change is what you want," Lady Randolph said, "and indeed I think that is what we must do. It does not matter if you are not prepared; of course you will want a great many things—but those can be got better in London than anywhere else, I should like you to come with me at once."

Lucy, who had been half reclining on the sofa cushions to please her new friend, here raised herself with an energy which was not at all in keeping with her supposed exhaustion. "At once!" she said with alarm, not perceiving at the moment that this was not complimentary to Lady Randolph. When she perceived it, Lucy's politeness was put to a severe test. She had a little awe of her future guardian, and she was very dutiful, more disposed by nature to do what she was told than to rebel. She added faintly a gentle remonstrance. "I thought there would have been a little

time to get ready; the dressmaker has only sent a few of the things; and then," she said, as if the argument was final, "we have had no time at all to get Jock's things in order. I would have to wait for Jock."

"Jock!" said Lady Randolph with the greatest surprise.

And then there was another pause. "I told you, Lucy," said Mrs. Ford, "that her Ladyship knew nothing about Jock, that she would never hear of taking a little boy into her house. A young lady is one thing, but a little boy—a little boy is quite different; I told you her Ladyship would never hear of it." In the satisfaction of having known it all the time, Mrs. Ford almost forgot the inconveniences of the position. Lucy sat bolt upright upon her sofa, disregarding all the fictions about necessary rest, and looked round upon them with a little spark in each of her blue eyes.

"My love," said Mrs. Stone in a low tone, "you have always intended and wished to send Jock to school, you must not forget that——"

There was nothing hostile to the new reign in these two women, at least not in this respect. Their deprecation and soothing were quite sincere. But Lady Randolph was a woman who had all her wits about her. She watched every indication of the thorny new ground which she was treading with a watchful eye. And she saw that Lucy's expression changed from that of quiet gravity and sadness into an energy, which was almost impassioned. The girl's hands caught at each other, her lips quivered, every feature moved.

"He is all I have," Lucy cried out suddenly, "everything I have! and he is such a little, little fellow; oh,

don't mind petting me, what do I care for dresses or things? but I want Jock; oh let me have Jock!"

"Hush, hush, Lucy; hush, dear," whispered Mrs. Stone, with sympathetic looks, and Mrs. Ford put her handkerchief to her eyes, and vowed sobbing that she would take every care of him. They were both half frightened by the sudden vehemence, which was so unlike Lucy. And at this moment there was a knock at the door, and Philip Rainy put in his head.

"I beg your pardon," he said, "but may I speak to Lucy for a moment? I thought you would like to know that they have no objections, Lucy—not the least objection. I am to have Jock. I told Mr. Rushton that I felt sure you would trust him to me."

Lucy felt that she had no longer any power of speech. She put her hands together instinctively, and gave Lady Randolph a piteous look; her heart swelled as if it would burst. Was it a judgment upon her for not being heart-broken, as perhaps she ought to have been, for the loss of her father? To have little Jock taken away from her was like tearing a piece of herself away.

But Lady Randolph had all her wits about her. It was not likely, if the sight of this comely young man who called the heiress Lucy, had alarmed even the men upstairs, that a woman would be less alive to the danger. She took Lucy's hands into her own, and pressed them kindly between hers.

"I don't know this gentleman, my dear," she said, "and I don't doubt he is very kind; but I am sure it would be mistaken kindness to separate these two poor children now. Just after one great loss, she is not in a fit state to bear another wrench. No. I don't know

who Jock is, and I have not much room in my little house: but you shall have your Jock, my dear. I will not be the one to take him from you," Lady Randolph said.

This was a thing which no one had so much as thought of. They all gazed at her with wonder and admiration, while Lucy in the sudden relief fell a-crying, more subdued and broken down than she had yet shown herself. While the girl was being caressed and soothed, Mrs. Stone went away, finding no room for her own ministrations. She said, "That is a very clever woman," to Philip Rainy at the door.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE NEW LIFE.

LADY RANDOLPH made haste to strike while the iron was hot. She *was* a clever woman, conscious enough (though perhaps no more than other people) of her own interests, and with schemes in her mind (as everybody had) of other interests to be served through the heiress, whom it had been one of the successes of her later life to obtain the charge of; but, having got this, she had no other intention than to treat Lucy kindly, and to make her life, which would add so many comforts to Lady Randolph's, pleasant and happy to herself. The best way to do this was to win the girl's heart. Lady Randolph had not been seized with love at first sight for her new charge; but she was rather prepossessed than otherwise by Lucy's appearance, and she was anxious to get hold of her and secure her

affections with as little delay as possible; and when she informed Mrs. Ford, as she sipped the cup of tea which that excellent woman prepared for her, that she was going to pass the night at the Hall, and that to return to that scene of her happier life was always "a trial" to her, she had already touched a chord of sympathy in Lucy's heart.

"What I should like," Lady Randolph said, "would be that you should come with me, my dear. It would be a great matter for me. The Hall belongs to Sir Thomas now, my nephew, you know. He is very kind to me, and I look upon him almost as a son, and his house is always open to me; but when you remember that I was once mistress there, and spent a happy life in it, and that now I am all alone, meeting ghosts in every room——"

Lucy's heart came to her eyes. It was all true that Lady Randolph said, but perhaps no such statement, made for the purpose of calling forth sympathy, ever achieves its end without leaving a certain sense of half-aroused shame in the mind of the successful schemer. Lady Randolph was touched by the warmth of feeling in the girl's eyes, and she was half ashamed of herself for the conscious exaggeration which had called it forth. Mrs. Ford was very sympathetic.

"I have never been so bad as that," she said, "I have always had company; I have never lost an 'usband, like you, my lady: but I feel for your ladyship all the same."

"And I shrink from going back," said Lady Randolph, "and going all alone. I think if Lucy could come with me—it would be a great thing for me; and we should have time to make acquaintance with each

other; and Mrs. Ford, I am sure, would look after all the things, and bring them and the little brother to meet us at the station to-morrow. Will you begin our life together by being kind to me, Lucy?" she said, with a smile.

There were difficulties, great difficulties, to be apprehended from Jock; but Lucy could not refuse such an appeal; and this was how it happened, that to the great surprise of Farafield, she was seen in her little crape bonnet and veil (much too old for her, Lady Randolph at once decided) driving in the grey of the wintry afternoon through the chilly streets—the day her father was buried! there were some people who thought it very unfeeling. When it was mentioned at dinner in the big house in the Market Place inhabited by the town-clerk, Mrs. Rushton was very much scandalised.

"The very day of the funeral!" she cried; "they might have let her keep quiet one day; for I don't blame the girl, how was she to know any better? I always said it was a fatal thing for Lucy when that old fool of a father chose a fashionable fine lady for her guardian. Oh don't speak to me, I have no patience with him. I think, from beginning to end, there never was such a ridiculous will. If it had been me, I should have taken it into Court, I should have had it broke—"

"You might have found it difficult to do that. How would you have had it broke, I should like to know?" her husband said.

"Ladies' law," said Mr. Chervil, who was very busy with his dinner, and did not care to waste words.

"It is not my trade," said Mrs. Rushton, "that's

your business. I can tell you I should have done it had it been in my hands. But it's not in my hands, a woman never has a chance. You may talk of ladies' law! but this I know, that if we had the law to make it would not be so silly. A woman would have known what was for the girl's true advantage; we would have said to old Mr. Trevor, don't be such an old fool. We should have told him boldly—such and such a thing is not for your girl's advantage. Had any of you men the courage to do that? And the result is, Lucy is in the hands of a fashionable lady who can't live without excitement, and takes her out to drive on the day of her father's funeral. I never heard anything like it, for my part."

This indignation, however, was scarcely called for by the facts of the case; and yet the event was very important for Lucy. There was not much excitement, from Mrs. Rushton's point of view, in the afternoon drive along the wintry roads to the Hall, which was nearly five miles out of Farafield. The days were still short, and the February afternoon was rainy and gloomy, and the latter part of the way was between two lines of bare and dusky hedgerows, with here and there a spectral tree waving darkly against the unseen sky; not a cheerful moment, nor was the landscape cheerful; an expanse of damp and darkling fields, long lines of vague road, no light anywhere, save the glimpses of reflection in wet ditches or pools of muddy water. Lady Randolph shivered, wrapping herself close in her furs; but for Lucy all was full of intense sensation and consciousness, which might be called excitement, though its effect upon her was to make her quieter and more outwardly serious than usual. From the moment when

she stepped into the carriage, Lucy felt herself in a new world. The life she had been used to lead wanted no comforts, so far as she was aware, but the rooms at the Terrace had possessed no charm, and the best vehicle with which Lucy was acquainted was the shabby fly of the neighbourhood, which lived at the livery-stables round the corner, and served all the inhabitants of the Terrace for all their expeditions. Lucy felt the difference when she suddenly found herself in the soft atmosphere of luxury which surrounded her for the first time in Lady Randolph's carriage, a little sphere by itself, a little moving world of wealth and refinement, where the very air was different from the muggy air of the commonplace world; and as they drove up the fine avenue, with all its tall trees rustling and waving against the faint greyness of the sky, and saw the great outline of the Hall dimly indicated by irregular specks of light, Lucy felt as if she were in a dream, but a dream that was more real than any waking certainty. She followed Lady Randolph into the great hall and up the wide spacious staircase, with these mingled sensations growing more and more strongly upon her. It was a dream; the noiseless servants, the luxurious carpents in which her foot sank, the great pictures, the space and largeness everywhere, no single feature of the place escaped her observation. It was a dream, yet it was more real than all the circumstances of the past existence, which now had become dreams and shadows, things which were over. She stepped not into a strange house only, but into a new life, when she crossed the threshold. This was the life her father had always told her of; he had told her it would begin when he died, and had prepared

her to take her place in it, always holding before her an ideal sketch of the position which was to be hers; and now it had come. The very fact that her entrance into this new world was made on his funeral day, gave to the new life that aspect of springing out of the old which he had always impressed upon her. She had lost no time, not a day, and the transition was natural, in being so sudden and so strange.

The Hall was a beautiful old house, stately in all its details, huge, and ample, and lofty. To go into it was like walking into a picture. There was a great mirror in the hall, which reflected her slim figure in its new crape and blackness stepping dubiously forward, making her think for a moment that it was some one else she saw, a girl with a pale face, strange to everything, who did not know which way to turn. Lady Randolph took her upstairs to a dim room, pervaded by ruddy firelight, and with glimmering candles lighted here and there. "You shall have this little room to-night, for it is near mine," Lady Randolph said. Lucy thought it was not a little, but a large room, bigger than any bedroom in the Terrace, and more comfortable than anything she had ever dreamt of. The badly-built draughty rooms in the Terrace were not half so warm as this soft silken cushioned nook. Lucy lay down doubtfully on the sofa as her new friend ordained, but her mind was far too active, and her imagination too hazy, to permit her perfect rest. Lady Randolph's maid, a soft-voiced, noiseless person, came to her and brought her tea, opening the little bag she had brought, and arranging everything she wanted, as Lucy's wants had never been provided for before. All this had a bewildering, yet an awakening effect upon

her. She lay for a little while upon the sofa warm and still, and cried a little, which relieved the incipient headache over her heavy eyes. Poor papa! he was gone as he had always planned and intended, and had left her to begin this new life, which he had drawn out and mapped before her feet. And how many things he had left her to do, things which it overawed her to think of. A flutter of anxiety woke in her heart, even now, as she wondered how she should ever be capable of doing them by herself without guidance, so ignorant as she was and inexperienced. But yet she would do them. She would obey everything, she would follow all his instructions, Lucy vowed to herself with a thrill of resolution, and a dropping of tears, which relieved, and at the same time exhausted her. But the exhaustion was a kind of refreshment. And after a while Lady Randolph came back, after Lucy had bathed her eyes, and smoothed back her fair hair, and took her down stairs.

"I am glad Tom is away," Lady Randolph said, "we will have it all to ourselves. To-morrow I will show you the house, and to-night we shall have a little quiet chat, and make friends."

She gave Lucy's hand a little pressure with her arm, and led her out of one softly lighted room into another, from the drawing-room to the dining-room where they sat down in the midst of the surrounding dimness at a shining table, all white and bright, with flowers upon it, unknown at this season in the Terrace. Lucy felt a thrill of awe when the family butler, most respectable of functionaries, put her chair close to the table as she sat down. Once more she caught a glimpse of herself in a mirror which reflected her from

head to foot, and wondered who it could be sitting there gazing at her with that little pale familiar face.

After the meal was over they went back to a little inner drawing-room, to reach which they had to go through a whole suite of half-lighted, luxurious rooms, all softly warm with firelight. "This used to be my favourite room," Lady Randolph said, sighing as she looked round. It was called the little drawing-room, and Lady Randolph spoke of it as a little nook; but it was bigger than the drawing-room at the Terrace. Here the girl was set down in a comfortable chair by the fire, and listened while Lady Randolph told of her former life here, and all she had done. "Tom is very kind," she said, "but how can I come here without meeting ghosts, the ghosts of all my happy days?"

Lucy listened with that devout attention which only youth so innocent and natural as hers can give to the recollections of one who has "gone through" these scenes of actual life which are all mystery and wonder to itself. Lucy had no ghosts in her memory; her father was not far enough off from her, nor was her sense of loss so strong as to make her feel that the world was henceforward peopled with sad recollections; but there was enough enlightenment in the touch of natural grief to make her understand. She was glad to be allowed to listen quietly—to feel the ache in her heart softened and subdued, and the lull of great exhaustion falling over her. That ache of natural, not excessive sorrow, is almost an additional luxury in such a case. It justifies the languor and gives an ennobling reason for it. And in a mind so young the very existence of sorrow, the first touches of experience, the sense of

really experiencing in its own person those emotions which it has heard of all its life, which are the inspiration of all tragedies, and the theme of all stories, carry with them an exquisite consciousness which is near enjoyment, though it is pain. Lucy was perhaps in her own constitution too simply matter-of-fact to feel all this—yet she did feel it vaguely. She was no longer a school-girl insignificant and happy, but a pale young woman in deep mourning who had taken a first step into the experiences of life. She leant back in her chair with that ache in her heart which she was almost proud of, yet with a sense of luxurious well-being round her, warmth, softness, kindness—and her hand in Lady Randolph's hand. Her shyness had melted away under the kind looks of her new friend; Lucy was too composed to be very shy by nature, but even the silence was not embarrassing to her, which is the greatest test of all.

It was easy after that to go on to talk of herself a little. Lady Randolph had become honestly interested in her young companion; Lucy was in every way so much better than she had expected. Even the hand which she had taken into her own was, now she had time to think of it, an agreeable surprise. Lucy's hand was small and soft, and as prettily shaped as if she had been born a princess. These indications of race, which are so infallible in romance, do not always hold in actual life. The old schoolmaster's daughter had no beauty to speak of; but her hand was as delicate as if the bluest blood in the world ran in her veins. Lady Randolph felt that Providence had been very good to her in this respect, for, indeed, she could not but feel that a large red coarse hand was what might

have been expected in the little *parvenue*. But Lucy was not coarse in any particular; she would never come to the pitch of refinement which that princess reached, who felt a pea through fifteen mattresses; but her quiet straightforwardness could never be vulgar. This certainty relieved her future chaperon from her worst fears.

"My house is not like this," Lady Randolph said; "London houses are small; but I try to make it comfortable. I have partly arranged your rooms for you; but I have left you all the finishing touches. It will amuse you to settle your pretty things about you yourself."

"I have not any pretty things," said Lucy; "I have nothing but—" Jock, she was going to say; but she was not sure of the prudence of the speech, seeing Jock was her grand difficulty in life.

"Never mind," said Lady Randolph, "nothing can be easier than to get them; and you must have a maid —unless indeed there is one that you would like to bring with you. I should prefer a new one, a stranger who would not make any comparisons, who would easily fall into the ways of my house."

"I have no one," said Lucy, eagerly; "I have never been accustomed to anything of the kind. I never had a maid in my life."

"Well, my dear, it has not been a very long life. We must find you a nice maid. Of course you will not go out this year; but there will be plenty of things to interest you. Are you very fond of music? or anything else? you must tell me what you like best."

"I can play—a little, Lady Randolph, not anything to speak of;" said Lucy, with the instinct of a school-

girl. She did not even think of music in any higher sense.

"Then that is not your *spécialité;* have you a *spécialité*, Lucy? Perhaps it is Art?"

"I can draw—a very little, Lady Randolph."

Lucy's questioner laughed. "Then I am in hopes," she said, "great hopes! that you are a real, honest, natural, ignorant girl, like what we used to be. Don't say you are scientific, Lucy! I could not understand that."

"I am verry sorry," said Lucy, with confusion; "Mrs. Stone gave me every advantage, but I never was quick at learning. I am not even a great reader, Lady Randolph; I don't know what you will think of me."

"If that is all, Lucy, I think I can put up even with that."

"But Jock is!" cried Lucy, seizing the opportunity with sudden temerity. "You would not believe what he has read—every kind of history and poetry, though he is so little. And he has never had any advantages. Papa always thought me the most important, because of my money; but now," said Lucy, with a little excitement, "now! It is the only thing in which I will ever go against him— I told him so always, so I hope it is not wicked to do it now—what I want most is to make something of Jock."

Now Lady Randolph was not interested in Jock. Her warmth of sympathy was a little chilled by this outburst, and the chill re-acted upon her companion. "We shall have plenty of time to talk of this," Lady Randolph said; "it is getting late: and you have had a very exhausting day. I think the first thing to be done is to have a good night's rest."

Next day there was a great gathering at Farafield station, when the carriage from the Hall drove up with Lady Randolph and her charge. The Fords had arrived bringing Jock, a pallid little figure all black, in unimaginable depths of mourning, and with a most anxious little countenance; for Jock had spent a miserable night, not crying as is the case generally with children, but framing a hundred terrors in his imagination, and half believing that Lucy had been spirited away, and would come back for him no more. The convulsive clutch which he made at her hand, and the sudden relaxation of all the lines of his eager little face as he recovered his sheet-anchor, his sole support and companion, went to Lucy's heart. She was almost as glad to see him. It was natural to feel him hanging upon her, trotting in her very footsteps, not letting her go for a moment. Philip Rainy was also there to bid his cousin good-bye; and in the sight of everybody, he took her by the arm and led her apart, and had a few minutes earnest conversation with Lucy. This talk was almost exclusively about Jock, but it was looked upon with great surprise and jealousy by several pairs of eyes. For Mrs. Stone had also come to the station to bid her pupil farewell, and she was accompanied by her nephew, Mr. St. Clair, who stood looking his handsomest, and holding his head high over the group in the pleasant consciousness of being much the tallest and most imposing personage among them. There was also a group of school-girls, under the charge of Mademoiselle, all ready to bestow kisses and good-wishes, and a few easy tears upon Lucy. And Mr. Rushton had come to see his ward off, with his wife and their son, Raymond, in attendance. All

the elder people looked on Philip Rainy with suspicion; but all the more did he hold Lucy by the sleeve talking to her, and keeping the rest of her friends waiting. When she did get to the carriage at last, it was through a tumult of leave-takings, which made the very guards and porters tearful. Mrs. Ford stood crying, saying, "God bless you!" at intervals; and Mrs. Stone folded her pupil in a close embrace. "Remember, Lucy, that you are coming back in six months, according to your good father's will; and I hope you will not have forgotten your old friends," she said with a mixture of affection and authority. Mr. St. Clair stood with his hat off, smiling and bowing. "May I say good-bye too? And good luck!" he said, enveloping Lucy's black glove in his large soft white hand. He was the tallest and the biggest there, and that always makes an impression upon a girl's imagination. Then the Rushtons came forward and took her into their group. "I felt that I must come to give you my very best wishes," Mrs. Rushton said, "and here is Raymond, your old playfellow, who hopes you remember him, Lucy. He only came home last night, but he would come to see you off." Then the girls all rushed at their comrade, whom they all envied, though some of them were sorry for her. "You will be sure to write," they cried with one voice, and a succession of hugs. "And, oh, Lucy!" cried Katie Russell, "please go and see mamma!" It was with difficulty that she was helped into the carriage after all these encounters, a little dishevelled, smiling and crying, and with Jock all hidden and wound up in her skirts. But the person who extricated her, and put her into the carriage was Philip, who held steadily to his superior rights. He was the last to touch her hand,

and he said, "Remember!" as the train began to move, as solemnly as did the solemn King on the scaffold. This cost Philip more than one dinner-party, and may almost be said to have damaged his prospects at Farafield. "Did you ever see such presumption," Mrs. Rushton said, "pushing in before you, her guardian?" And he was not asked to the Rushtons for a long time after, not till they were in absolute despair for a stray man to fill a corner. It was like the dispersion of a congregation from some special service to see all the people streaming away. And Lucy was the subject of a hundred fears and doubts. They shook their heads over her, all but the school-girls, who thought it would be too delightful to be Lucy. It was thus that Lucy set out upon the world.

CHAPTER XIX.

LADY RANDOLPH'S MOTIVE.

THE past seemed entirely swept away and obliterated from Lucy, when she found herself in Lady Randolph's London house, inhabiting two rooms charmingly and daintily furnished, with a deft and respectful maid belonging to herself, at her special call, and everything that it was desirable a young lady of fortune should have. The allowance made for her was very large, so her father had willed, and her new guardian employed it liberally. Needless to say that Lady Randolph was not herself rich; but she was not greedy or grasping. She liked dearly the large additional income she had to spend, but she had no wish to make economies

from it at Lucy's cost. Economies, indeed, were not in Lady Randolph's way. She liked a large liberal house. She liked the sense of a full purse into which she could put her hand without fear of the supply failing (who does not?) She liked the power of moving about as she pleased, of filling her house with visitors, and making herself the cheerful beneficent centre of a society not badly chosen. She was most willing to give her charge "every advantage," and to spend the large income she brought with her entirely upon the life which they were to lead together. Old Trevor was shrewd; he knew what he was doing—and his choice carried out his intentions fully. Lady Randolph was pleased to have a great heiress to bring out, and she was anxious to bring her out in the very best way. Her object on her own side was, no doubt, selfish—in so far that to live liberally was pleasant to her; and to spend largely, a kind of necessity of her nature. But all this largeness and liberality, which were so pleasant to herself, were exactly what was wanted, according to her father's plan, for Lucy—to whom Lady Randolph communicated the advantages procured by her money with all the lavish provision for her pleasure which a doting mother might have made. In all this there was a fine high-spirited honourableness about Lucy's new guardian. She scorned to save a penny of the allowance. And we are bound to add that this course of procedure did not approve itself (what course ever does?) to Lady Randolph's friends. While Lucy was being established in those luxurious, yet simple, rooms, which were good enough for a princess, yet so little *fine*, that Lucy's simplicity had not yet found out how delicate and costly they

were, Lady Randolph's small coterie of advisers were censuring her warmly downstairs.

"You ought to lay by half of it," old Lady Betsinda Molyneux was saying at the very moment, when Lucy, with tranquil pleasure, aided by Jock in a state of half-resentful, half-happy excitement, was putting a set of pretty books into the low bookshelves that lined her little sitting-room; "You ought to lay by one half of it. Good life! a girl like that to get the advantage of being in your house at all! Instead of petting her, and getting her everything that you can think of, she ought to be too thankful if you put her in the housemaid's closet. If you don't show a little wisdom now, I will despair of you, my dear," the old lady said. She was an old lady of the first fashion; but she was all the same a very grimy old lady with a moustache, and a complexion which suggested coal-dust rather than *poudre de riz.* Her clothes would have been worth a great deal to an antiquary, notwithstanding that they were all shaped, more or less, in accordance with the fashion; but they gave Lady Betsinda the air of an animated rag-bag; and she wore a profusion of lace, clouds of black upon her mantle, and ruffles of white about her thin and dingy neck— but it would have been a misnomer, and also an insult, to call that lace white. It was frankly dirty, and toned to an indescribable colour by years and wear. She was worth a small fortune where she stood with all her old trumpery upon her; and yet a clean old woman in a white cap and apron would have been a much fairer spectacle. Her rings flashed as she moved her quick bony wrinkled hands, which were of a colour as indescribable as her lace. It would have been hard to have seen any signs of noble race in Lady

Betsinda's hands; and yet the queer old figure hung round with festoons of lace, and clothed in old black satin as thick as a modern party wall, could not have been anything but that of a woman of rank. Her garments smelt not of myrrh and frankincense, but of camphor, in which they were always put away to preserve them; and the number of times these garments had been through the hands of Lady Betsinda's patient maid, and the number of stitches that were required to keep them always in order was more than anybody, except the hard-worked official who had charge of the old lady's wardrobe, could say.

"I think so too," said a small and delicate person who was seated in a deep low chair upon the other side of the fire. She was not old like Lady Betsinda. She was a fragile, little, pale woman approaching fifty, the wife of an eminent lawyer and a little leader of society in her way. She wrote a little, and drew a little, and sang a little, and was a great patroness of artists, to whom, it need not be said, Mrs. Berry-Montagu was very superior, gracious to them as a queen to her courtiers; while young painters, and young writers, and young actors were very obsequious to her, as to a woman who could, their elders told them, "make their fortunes." And there was more truth than usual in this, for though Mrs. Berry-Montagu could not make anybody's fortune, she could do something to mar it, and very frequently exercised that less amiable power, writing pretty little *critiques* which made the young people wince, and damning their best efforts with elegant depreciation. These were two of the friends who took Lady Randolph's moral character and social actions under their control. Most women,

especially those who are widows, have a superintending tribunal of this description, before which all their actions are judged; and nowhere does the true dignity of the woman who is married come out with more imposing force than in such circumstances. Lady Betsinda was vehement; she was old and the daughter of a duke, and had a very good right to say what she pleased, and keep the rest of the world in order. But Mrs. Berry-Montagu was, so to speak, two people. Her views were enlarged, as everybody acknowledged tacitly by her possession of that larger shadow of a husband behind her — and she had a great unexpressed contempt for all women who were without that dual dignity. A smile of the softest disdain—nay the word is too strong—and so is derision; also much too potent for the delicate subdued amusement with which she contemplated the doings of the *femme sole* of all classes—hovered about her lips. This did not spring from any special devotion on her part to her husband, or faith in him, but only from her consciousness of her own good fortune and dignity, and the high position she occupied in consequence of his existence. We have given too much space to the description of Lady Randolph's privy council. Has not every solitary woman in society a governing body which is much the same?

"I think so too," Mrs. Berry-Montagu said, "you ought really to think of yourself a little; self-renunciation is a beautiful virtue; but then we are not called upon to exercise it for everybody, and a girl of this description is fair game."

"If I were a hunter," said Lady Randolph.

"Oh, my dear, don't tell me, you are all hunters,"

said the little lady in serene superiority. "What do you take her for? You are not one of the silly women that want a girl to take about with them, to be an excuse for going to parties; therefore you must have an object. Now, of course, we don't want to know, till you tell us, what that object is; but in the meantime you ought, it is your duty, to derive a little advantage on your side from what is so great an advantage on hers."

"That's speaking like a book," said Lady Betsinda, "but I like to be plain for my part; you ought to lay by half, my dear. You want to go to Homburg when the season's over, that stands to reason; and when you come back you've got dozens of visits to pay—the most expensive thing in the world—and after all this won't last for ever; there will come a time when she will marry, or set up for herself; that's quite common now-a-days; girls do it, and nobody thinks any harm."

"Oh, she will marry," said Mrs. Berry-Montagu with a significant smile.

"Most likely she'll marry; but not so sure as it once was," said Lady Betsinda, nodding her old head, "women's ways have changed; I don't say if it is better or worse, but they have changed; and anyhow it is your duty to look after yourself. Now don't you think it her duty to look after herself? Disinterestedness and so forth, are all very fine. We know you're unselfish, my dear."

"Every woman is unselfish; it is the appropriate adjective," said Mrs. Berry-Montagu, "but you must recollect that you have no one to look after your

interests, and that, however it goes against you, you *must* take yourself into consideration."

"Oh, this is all much too fine for me!" cried the culprit on her trial. "Rather congratulate me on having been so lucky. I might have found myself with a vulgar hoyden, or a little silly *parvenue* on my hands—and here is a quiet little well-bred person, as composed, and with as much good sense—I am afraid with more good sense than I have myself."

"Yes, she will make her own out of you. You are just a little simpleton, Mary Randolph, though you're twice as big and half as old as me. She'll turn you round her little finger. Isn't your whole house turned upside down for her and her belongings? Why, there was a child about! a big pair of eyes, not much more! are you taking him *pardessus le marché?* She is capable of it," cried the old lady, shaking a cloud of camphor out of her old satin skirts in impatience, and appealing to her colleague. Mrs. Berry-Montagu put some eau-de-cologne on her handkerchief and applied it tenderly to her nose.

"You continue to use patchouli. I *hoped* it had gone *completely* out of fashion," she said.

"It isn't patchouli. I have my things carefully looked after, that's why they last so well. I have little bags of camphor in all my dresses. It is good for everything. Many people think it is only moths that camphor is useful for, but it is good for everything—and a very wholesome scent. I hate perfumes myself."

"Who is the little boy?" said Mrs. Berry-Montagu, with a languid smile.

"Ah! that is the sore point," said Lady Randolph. "There is a little brother."

This was echoed by both the ladies in different tones of amazement.

"Then how is it that *she* has the money?" Lady Betsinda asked.

"It came from Lucy's mother; the boy had nothing to do with it, he has not a penny. Poor child! I can see Lucy is disturbed about him. He has three thousand pounds, and nothing more."

"Dear Lady Randolph, how good you are," said Mrs. Berry-Montagu, with gentle derision; "what can you want with a child like this in your house?"

"What can I do? Lucy would be wretched without him; he is the only tie she has, the only duty. What am I to do?"

Mrs. Berry-Montagu shook her head softly, and smiled once more — smiled with the utmost significance. "You must, indeed, see your way very clearly," she said, with that gentle languor which sat so well upon her; "when you burden yourself with the boy."

"I don't know what you mean by seeing my way;" Lady Randolph said, with some heat. An uncomfortable flush came upon her face, and something like consciousness to her manner. "I had no alternative. Taking Lucy, I was almost bound to take her brother too—when I found out her devotion to him."

"Ah you're too good, too good, my dear, you don't think half enough of your own interests;" said Lady Betsinda. "If the girl had come to me, I'll tell you what I should have done. I'd have been kind to her, but not too kind. I'd have let her see clearly that

little brothers are sent to school. I'd have given her to understand that I was doing her a great favour in having her at all. She should not have wanted for anything: I don't advise you or anybody to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs; but to make her the chief interest, and everything to give way to her, that's what I would never do."

"I am afraid I shall have to take my own way, so far as that goes," said Lady Randolph, roused to a little offence.

"Yes, dear, of course you will take your own way, we all do," said Mrs. Berry-Montagu, giving her friend a kiss before she went away, "and I don't doubt it will all come right in the end."

The two visitors went out together, and they stopped to talk for a moment before they parted at the door of the little stuffy brougham, which carried Lady Betsinda from one place to another.

"I suppose she has something in her head?" said the old lady. And, "Oh, who can doubt it?" said the other; "Sir Tom!"

Was it true? Lady Randolph was very angry and impatient as she turned from the door, after the kiss which she had bestowed on each. Women have to kiss, as men shake hands; it is the established formula of parting among friends, not to be omitted, which would imply a breach, because of a little momentary flash of irritation. But the cause of her anger was not so much what they had said to her as that word of mutual confidence which she knew would pass between them at the door; was it true? If it had not been so, Lady Randolph would not have divined it. She paced up and down her pretty drawing-room,

giving one glance from the window to see, as she expected, the one lady standing at the door of the little carriage, while the wrinkled countenance of the other bent out from within. She saw Lady Betsinda give a great many nods of intelligence, and her heart burned within her with momentary fury. Often it happens that the worst of the pang of being found out is the revelation it makes to one's self. Lady Randolph meant no harm; not to introduce her nephew to Lucy would have been, in the circumstances, a thing impossible—and who could expect her to be responsible for anything that might follow? When an unmarried man meets a nice girl, there is never any telling what may happen. And Lucy was certainly a nice girl, notwithstanding her ignorance and simplicity, and her great fortune. To be sure, any connection of this kind would be a mésalliance for Tom; but even these were common incidents, and took place in the very highest circles. If this was fortune-hunting, then fortune-hunting was simple nature and no more. After a while the irritation died away. She sat down again and took up the book she had been reading when that committee of direction came in, and began their sitting upon her and her concerns. Lady Randolph was about sixty, a large and ample woman with no pretence at juvenility; but her eye was not dim, nor her natural force abated. There was only a small proportion of grey—just enough to give it an air of honest reality—in her abundant hair. As she sat and read a sentence or two, then paused and mused a little with the book closed over her hand, she recovered her composure. "What good will it do *me?*" she asked herself triumphantly. Had she been seeking her own advantage her conduct might

have been subject to blame; but she was not seeking her own advantage. Should any marriage come to pass, it would deprive her, at one stroke, of all the comfort which Lucy's allowance brought her. She would be giving up, not gaining anything. When this thought passed through her mind, it seemed a full answer to all possible objections, and she resumed her reading with the feeling that she had put every caviller to silence, and nobly justified herself to herself. What advantage would it be to me? the words twined themselves among those of the book she was reading, and appeared on every page more visible than the print. "What good would it do to me? I should suffer by it," she said.

While Lady Randolph was thus employed downstairs, Lucy and Jock were seated together at the window of the pretty little sitting-room, which had been so carefully prepared for the girl's comfort and pleasure. It was high up, but it had a pretty view over the gardens of the neighbouring square, where soon the trees would begin to bud and blossom, and where even now the birds began to hold colloquies and prelude, with little interrogative pipings and chirpings, till it should be time for better music—while in front, though at some distance down, was the cheerful London street, in which there was always variety to eyes accustomed to the Terrace at Farafield. They had not tired yet of its sights and sounds, or found it noisy, as Lady Randolph sometimes did. The house was situated in one of the streets leading out of Grosvenor Square, and all sorts of things went past, wheel-barrows full of flowers, flowers in such quantities as they had never seen in the country, trades-people's carts of every

description, German bands, all kinds of amusing things.

"Here is another organ," cried Jock, with excitement; and he added with a scream of delight, "it's got a monkey! and there is another little boy on a pony," the child added with a sigh, half of pleasure, half of envy. "What a long, lovely tail it has got! and here are two carriages coming, and a big van with a great picture outside. Did you think there were as many things in London, Lucy? There is something passing every minute, and every day."

"Oh, yes, I knew," said Lucy, with calm superiority, from the other end of the room. "I told you all about Madame Tussaud's, don't you remember, before you went there? I read all that book about London," she said, with modest pride.

"It isn't a book," said Jock, "it is only a guide. What a funny thing it is that you can read that, and you don't care for stories, or histories either."

Then there was a little pause. The boy on the pony cantered away, the big furniture van with the landscape painted upon it lumbered along so slowly that its interest was more than exhausted, the carriages drew up at a house out of sight. There was a momentary lull, and Jock's interest flagged. He turned round, recalled to himself by this recollection of his favourite studies.

"Am I always to live here?" he asked, suddenly.

Now this was a question that had much troubled Lucy's mind; for, indeed, Jock had not been expected, and his presence somewhat disturbed the arrangements of Lady Randolph's household—while, on the other hand, Lucy had already given to her little brother the

position which every woman gives to some male creature, and consulted his wishes with a servility which sometimes was ludicrously inappropriate, as in the present instance. She could not bring herself to hurt Jock's feelings by suggesting that it would be better for him to go to school, though this conviction had been gaining upon her as her own mind calmed, and the child himself recovered his spirits and courage. Lucy's heart began to beat a little faster when her little autocrat broached the question. She came up to him and began to stroke and smooth the limp locks, which would not be picturesque whatever was done to them.

"That is what vexes me a little, Jock; I don't know. You ought to be getting on with your education; and Lady Randolph is very kind; but she did not know you were coming—"

"Nor me either," said Jock, regardless of grammar. He had got over this painful up-rooting of his little life, but even at eight such a disturbance of habits is not easily got over. There was no white rug to lie down upon, no old father always seated there to justify the strange existence of the child, and Lady Randolph, shocked by his indiscriminate reading, had provided him with good little-boy books, which did not at all suit Jock. He mused a little, gazing down into the street, and then resumed. "Nor me either. I would like some other place; I would like you and me to stay always at home, as we used to do. I would like——"

Jock paused again, not very clear what it was that he would like; and Lucy looked vaguely over his head, waiting for the utterance of her oracle. Poor little oracle, for whom there was no certain and settled

place! She stroked his hair softly, with infinite tenderness in her half-motherly, half-childish soul, to make him amends for this wrong which Providence had done him. She did not know what to suggest, nor what place to think of, but watched him to divine his wishes, as if he had been double, and not half her age.

"I would like," said Jock, some gleam of association recalling to him one fable among the many that filled his memory, "to be a giant like that one you told me the story about; you never told me the end of that story, Lucy. I'd like to be able to go where I liked, and travel all over the world, and meet with black knights, and dwarfs, and armies marching——"

"There are no dwarfs nor giants nowadays," said Lucy, "but you will be able to go where you like when you are a man."

"It's so long to wait till you are a man," said the child, peevishly. "I'd like you and me to go away together and nobody to stop us. I'd like to be cast away on a desert island," he cried, with a sudden perception of paradise, "that's what I should like best of all."

"But I don't think I should like it at all."

"There!" he cried, "that is always how it is; you and me never like the same things. I suppose it is because you are a girl." This Jock said more regretfully than contemptuously, for he was very fond of his sister; and then he added, with a little sigh, not of sorrow, but of resigned acceptance of a commonplace sort of expedient, not absolutely good, but the best in the circumstances, "I suppose you had better send me to school."

CHAPTER XX.

THE RUSSELLS.

"THAT is just what I was thinking," Lady Randolph said, "we can do two things, Lucy, two benefits at once. I know just the place for little Jock, since he wants to go to school—with a poor lady whom you will like to help—and," she added with a little softening of compassion, "where you could go to see him often; and he could come—" this addition was less cordial. Lady Randolph was a woman too easily led away by her feelings. She thought of her committee, and restrained herself. "Katie Russell must have told you about her mother. She has taken a house at Hampstead, or one of those places, and is trying to set up a little school. We are all on the outlook for Indian children, or, indeed, pupils of any kind. Jock will be quite happy there. She will take an interest in him as your brother. I have got her address somewhere. Shall we go and look her up to-day?"

Lucy's eyes, before she replied, travelled anxiously to Jock's face to read that little chart of varying sentiment, and take her guidance from it. But Jock's face said nothing. He could not any longer lie on the hearth-rug, but he was doubled up in a corner by the fire, reading as usual, one of the books with which Lady Randolph had thought it proper to supply him—a proper little story about little boys, supposed to be adapted to the calibre of eight years old. Perhaps it was more fit for him than the "History of the Plague," but he did not like it so well.

"I think — that would be very nice, Lady Randolph," said Lucy doubtfully.

"Well, my dear, we can but go and see. Jock is too young to judge for himself; but he can come too, and tell you how he likes it. Mrs. Russell is very kind, I believe. She is, also, rather feeble, and does not know quite so well what she would be at as one could wish. She is always changing her plans. It may help to fix her if we take her a pupil. It is a great blessing," Lady Randolph said with a sigh, "when people know their own mind—especially poor people who have to be helped by their friends."

"I wonder," said Lucy, "if it is more difficult to be poor than to be rich."

"Oh, there can be little doubt about that — for women, at least. I am not in the least sorry for the butchers and bakers—they have their trade—or for our housemaids, which is the same thing; but you and I, Lucy. If anything were to happen, if we were to lose all our money, what should we do?"

"I should not be afraid," said Lucy quietly, "for you know I was born poor; but to have a great deal of money, and not know how to employ it—that was always what papa said. He gave me a great many directions; but I don't know if I understood them, and sometimes I do not feel sure whether he understood. Life is different here and at the Terrace, Lady Randolph."

"Very different, my dear; but you need not bewilder your poor little head just yet. You will be older, you will have more experience before you have any occasion to trouble yourself about the employment of your money. I have no doubt all the invest-

ments are excellent—your father had a good business head."

"It was not about investments I was thinking," Lucy said. "I have no power over them."

"Nor over anything else, fortunately, at your present age," Lady Randolph said with a smile. "We may all be very thankful for that; for I fear, unless you are very unlike other girls, that you would throw a good deal of it away."

Lucy did not smile, or take any notice of this pleasantry. Her next remark was very serious. "Don't you think," she said, "that it is very wrong for me to be so rich, when others are so poor?"

"A little Radical," cried Lady Randolph with a laugh. "Why, Lucy, I never thought a proper little woman like you would entertain such revolutionary sentiments."

"You see," said Lucy very gravely, "it is upon me the burden falls; every one feels most what is most hard upon themselves."

Lady Randolph laughed again, but this time with a puzzled air. "Hard upon you!" she said. "My dear, half the girls in England—and the men too—would give their heads to have half so much reason to complain."

"Men, perhaps, might understand better, Lady Randolph; but it is altogether very strange. Papa must have known a great deal better; but he did nothing himself. All that he wanted, so far as I can make out, was to make more and more money; and then left the use of it—the spending of it—to a girl that knows nothing. I never took much thought of this while he was living, but I feel very bewildered now."

"Wait a little," Lady Randolph said, "you will find it very easy after a while; and, when you marry, your husband will give you a great deal of assistance. In England you can never be at a loss in spending the largest income; and the more you have, the more satisfactorily you can spend it, the better return you have for your money. It is among us poor people that money is most unsatisfactory. It never brings so much as it ought," she said with that air of playfulness which, on such subjects, is the usual disguise for the most serious feeling. Lucy looked up at her with a gravity that disdained all disguise.

"But you do not mean to say, Lady Randolph, that *you* are poor?"

This question brought the colour to Lady Randolph's face. "You are very downright, my dear," she said, "but I will be honest too. Yes, Lucy, I am poor. The allowance that is made for you, is a great matter for me. Without that I should not have dreamt—my dear, you must not think I mean anything unkind—"

"Oh, no; you could not have cared for me even had I been nicer than I am,'" said Lucy, "for you had never seen me. Then I am rather glad it is so, Lady Randolph; but you should not give me so many things."

Lady Randolph laughed, but the moisture came into her eyes. "Lucy, I begin to think you are a darling," she said.

"Do you?" cried Lucy, with a warm flush which gave her face a certain beauty for a moment. "But I am afraid not," she said, shaking her head. "Nobody ever said that. I am glad—*very* glad that you think you will not mind having me; and it is very—very

kind of you to do so much for me. But I should be quite as happy if you liked me, and did not buy so many things for me. Is it vulgar to say it? I am almost afraid it is. I never had anything half—not a tenth part so nice at the Terrace as you give me here."

"You were a little school-girl then, and now you are a young lady—a great heiress; and must begin to live as such people do."

Lucy shook her head again. "I am only me," she said with a smile, "all the same."

"Not quite the same; but to leave these perplexing subjects—what is to be done about your own studies, Lucy?"

"Must I have studies?" she asked with a tone of melancholy; then added submissively, "Whatever you think best, Lady Randolph."

"My dear, you are far too good. I should like you to have a little will of your own."

"Oh, yes! I have a will of my own. If you please, I do not wish to have any more lessons. I will read books; but they all said I never would play very well, and I cannot draw at all. I can speak French a little, but it is very bad, and I have done about twenty German exercises," Lucy said with a shudder.

"Poor child! but I fear you must go on with these dreadful experiences. Perhaps a good German governess for a year—"

Lucy shuddered again. She thought of the Fräulein at the White House, with an inward prayer for deliverance. The Fräulein knew everything, all her own business, and other people's special branches, even better than her own. Her very spectacles shone with knowledge.

"They cannot be *all* like each other," Lucy said, "and I will do whatever you like, Lady Randolph."

There was never a girl so docile and obedient. Lady Randolph almost regretted the absence of all struggle, till her eyes fell upon little Jock in the corner, holding his book somewhat languidly. Jock did not care for this correct literature; the last thing in the world that he had any acquaintance with was the doings of children at school.

"Do you like your story-book, Jock?"

"No," said Jock, concisely.

He let it drop from his hand; he did not even feel very deeply desirous of knowing what was the end.

"I am sorry for that; I hunted it up for you out of my old nursery. Nobody had touched the things for thirty years."

"It is very pretty—outside," Jock said, eyeing the gilding, "but I don't care much about little boys," he added, with dignity, "I don't know what it means."

"That is because you are so little, my dear."

"Oh, no, because I don't understand it. I have read much nicer books; the 'History of the Plague,' that was what I liked best, better than 'Robinson Crusoe,' as good as the 'Pilgrim's Progress.'"

"How old-fashioned the child is," Lady Randolph said. "Will you come with us to see the school where Lucy wishes you to go?"

"Lucy did not wish it," said the boy, "it was me. I told her. I will go—because I suppose it is the right thing. You can't grow up to be a giant, or even a common man, without going to school. I do not like it at all, but it is the right thing to do."

"You are a wise little man," said Lady Randolph,

"and do you think you may perhaps grow up a giant, Jock?"

"Not in tallness," Jock said.

He looked at her with something like contempt, and she was cowed in spite of herself. His very reticence impressed her, for he relapsed into silence, and gave no further explanation, not caring even to describe in what, if not in tallness, he expected to be a giant; and the two sat and looked at each other for a minute in silence. They looked very unlikely antagonists, but it was not the least important of the two who was most nervous. Lady Randolph felt as if it were she who was the inexperienced, the uninstructed one. She did not like to venture out of her depth again.

"Will you go and get your hat and come with us? You must be very kind to Lucy, and not worry her. You know she does not want you to leave her; but, also, you know, little Jock——"

Lady Randolph looked at him with a little alarm, feeling that his big eyes saw through and through her, and not knowing what weird insight might be in them, or what strange thing he might say.

But Jock's answer was to get up, and put away his book.

"I am going," he said.

It was the old lady who was afraid of him. She sat and watched him, and was glad when he was gone. Lucy was comprehensible and manageable, but the child dismayed and troubled her. Poor little forlorn boy! There was no home for him anywhere, no one to care for him but Lucy, who no doubt would form, as people say, "other ties."

It was a bright morning in March, the skies full of

the beauty of Spring, the air fresh with showers, the sun shining; the buds were beginning to swell on the trees, and primroses coming out in the suburban gardens. Jock looked somewhat forlorn, all by himself, in the front seat of the carriage, buttoned closely into his great-coat, and looking smaller than ever as his delicate little face looked out from the thick collar; opposite to Lady Randolph's portly person, in her great furred mantle, he looked like a little waxen image; and he sat very stiffly, trying to draw up his thin little legs beneath him, but now and then receiving a warning glance from Lucy, who was extremely nervous about his manners. They were both amused however by the long drive across London, and up the hill towards the northern suburbs. Lady Randolph did not know the way. She took almost as much interest as they did in the animated streets.

"Jock, little Jock, there is the heath. Do you see the big furze bushes?" she said. "How strange to see a place so wild, yet so near town!"

"It is not so good as our common," Jock said. Yet school took a more smiling aspect after he had got a glimpse of the broken ground and wild vegetation.

They drew up at last after a troublesome search (for Lady Randolph's coachmann would not have betrayed any knowledge of that out of the way locality for worlds, it was as much as his reputation was worth), before a little new house, with a bay-window, and a small square patch of green called a garden. Through the bay-window there was a dim appearance visible of some one seated at a table writing; but when the carriage stopped there was evidently a great commotion in the house, and the dim figure dis-

appeared. Some one hastily opening an upper window, a sound of bells rung, and of noisy footsteps running up and down the stairs, were all audible to the little party seated in the carriage, who were amused by all this pantomime.

"She will have a headache," Lady Randolph said, "as soon as she sees us."

Lucy, for her part, felt that to sit here at her ease and witness the flutter in the house, of excitement and expectation, was scarcely generous. She was relieved when the door opened. It wounded her to see the disdain of the footman, the scorn with which he contemplated the house, and the maid who came to the door; all this penetrated her mind with a curious sense of familiarity. Mrs. Ford, too, would have been greatly excited had a pair of prancing horses drawn up before her door, and a great lady in furs and velvet been seen about to enter; and Lucy knew that she herself would have rushed out of the parlour, had she been sitting there, and would have been apt to fly to an upstairs window and peep out upon the unwonted visitor. She felt all this in the person of the others, to whom she was coming in the capacity of a great lady. She had never felt so humble or so insignificant as when she stepped out of the carriage, following Lady Randolph. Jock grasped at her hand as he jumped down. He clung to it with both his without saying a word. He did not feel at all sure that he was not now, this very moment, to be consigned to separation and banishment, and the new life of school for which he had offered himself as a victim. He contemplated that approaching fate with courage, with wide open, unwinking eyes, but all the same at the

descent of Avernus, at the mouth of the pit, so to speak, clung to his only protector, his sole comforter. She stooped down and kissed him hurriedly as they crossed the little green.

"You shan't go if you do not like it, Jock."

"But I am going," said the child, with courage that was heroic; though he clung to her hand as if he never would let it go, all the same.

Mrs. Russell was a pretty, faded woman, with hair like Katie's, and the same blue eyes; but the mirth was out of them, and puckers of anxiety had come instead. She had put up her handkerchief to her forehead when Lucy entered the room. She had a headache, as Lady Randolph divined. There was a little flush of excitement upon her cheeks. When Lucy was introduced to her, she gave the girl a wistful look first, then made an anxious inspection of her, returning again and again, Lucy felt, to her face. Was not there in that look the inevitable contrast which it was so impossible to help making?

"Is this," she said, "the young lady Katie has written to me about?" she added, faltering, after a moment, "the dear young friend who has been so kind to her?" and again she turned a questioning, wistful look upon Lucy, whose fate was so different.

"Indeed," said Lucy, "I could not be kind, I wish I could; but I like Katie very dearly, Mrs. Russell."

"Ah, my dear, if I may call you so," cried the poor woman with the headache, "that is the very sweetest thing you could say," but all the same her eyes kept questioning. What had the heiress come for? what had Lady Randolph come for? When visitors like these enter a very poor house, should not

some pearls and diamonds fall from their lips, some little wells of comforting wealth spring up beneath their feet?

"How does the school go on?" said Lady Randolph, "that is the cause of our visit really. I heard of a little boy—but how does it go on? Did you settle about those Indian children?"

"Ah!" said Mrs. Russell, "there is nothing so hard to get as Indian children; they are the prizes; if one can but get a good connection in that way, one's fortune is made; but there are so many that want them. It seems to me that there is nothing in all the world but a crowd of poor ladies fighting for pupils. It will be strange to you, Miss Trevor, to hear anyone talk like that," she added.

She could not help, it would seem, this reference to Lucy; a girl who was made of money, who could support dozens of families and never feel it. It was not that the poor lady wanted her money, but she could not help feeling a wistful wonder about her, a young creature whose fate was so different! When one is very poor, it is so natural to admire wealth, and so curious to see it, and watch its happy owners, if only to note in what way they differ. Lucy did not differ in any way, at which poor Mrs. Russell admired and wondered all the more.

"But you have some pupils?" Lady Randolph said.

"Yes, three in the house, and six who are day-scholars. Bertie tells me it is not such a bad beginning. I tried for little boys, because there are so few, in comparison, that take little boys; and Bertie teaches them Latin."

"I thought your son was to get a situation."

"Yes, indeed, but some one else got it instead; one can hardly grudge it, when one knows how many poor young fellows there are with nothing. He is writing," Mrs. Russell said, with some pride.

"Writing!" Lady Randolph echoed with dismay, mingled with contempt. Their points of view were very different. To the mother, fortune seemed to be hovering, doubtful, yet very possible, over the feather of her boy's pen; to the woman of the world, a little clerkship in an office would have been much more satisfactory. "You should not encourage him in that; I fear it is not much better than idleness," Lady Randolph said, shaking her head.

"Idleness! look at Mr. Trollope, and all those gentlemen; it is a fine profession! a noble profession!" said the poor lady, fervently; but she added with a sigh, "if he could only get an opening, that is the hard thing. If he only knew somebody! Bertie takes the Latin, and Mary the English, and I superintend, and give the music-lessons."

"And you are getting on?"

The poor woman looked the rich woman (as she thought) in the face, with eyes that filled with tears. She could not answer in words before the strangers. She mutely and faintly shook her head, with a pathetic attempt at a smile.

Both Lucy and little Jock saw the silent communication, and divined it, perhaps, better than the elder lady. As for Lucy, her heart ached with sympathy, and a flood of sudden resolutions, intentions, took possession of her; but what could she do? She had to keep silent, holding Jock's little hand fast, who stood by her knee.

"I thought you might perhaps have an opening for—the little boy I heard of. He is a delicate child, and peculiar; he would require a great deal of special care. If you think you have time—"

"Oh!" said Mrs. Russell, the pink flush deepening on her cheeks; "plenty of time! And I think I may say for myself that I am very good with delicate children. I take an interest in them. I—you would like to see Bertie, perhaps, about the Latin?" Mrs. Russell rang her bell hastily. She was feverishly anxious to conclude the bargain without loss of time. "Will you tell Mr. Bertie I want him," she said, going to the door, to anticipate the maid, who was not too anxious to reply. "I am here, mother," they heard, in a youthful bass—at no great distance—evidently the house was all in a stir of expectation. Mrs. Russell came back with a little nervous laugh. "Bertie will be here directly," she said; "I would ask you to step into the schoolroom, and see them, but the truth is they are all out for a walk. Mary has taken them to the heath. It is so good for them—and it was such a beautiful day—and my headache was particularly bad. When my headache is very bad, the voices of the children drive me wild." Poor soul! as soon as she had said this, she perceived that it was a thing inexpedient to say. But by this time the door had opened again, and introduced a new figure. He came in with his hands in his pockets, after the manner of young men. He, too, was like Katie; but his face was cloudy, not so open as hers, and his features handsomer. He stood hesitating, his eyes going from one to another; to Lucy first—was not that natural? Then he straightened himself out, and took a hand from one

of his pockets, and presented it to Lady Randolph. He was eager too, but with a suppressed bravado, as if anxious to show that he did not mean it, and was himself personally much at his ease.

"So this is Bertie!" said Lady Randolph. "What a long time it must be since I have seen him! Why, you are a man now; and what a comfort it must be to your mother to have you with her!"

Mrs. Russell clasped her thin hands. "Yes, it *is* a comfort!" she said. "What should I do if Bertie were away?"

Lucy was in the position of a spectator while all this was going on, and, though she was not a great observer, something jarred in this little scene, she could not tell what. She surprised a glance from the mother to the son, which did not chime in with her words, and Bertie himself did not respond with enthusiasm. "I don't know if I am a comfort," he said; "but here I am anyhow—and very glad to see an old friend."

"I hear you are coming out as a literary character, Bertie?"

"I am trying to write a little; it seems the best trade nowadays. I believe there are heaps of money to be made by it," he said, with that air of careless grandeur which is so delightful to the unsophisticated imagination; "and not much trouble. The only thing is to get one's hand in."

"That is what I was telling Lady Randolph," said his mother, her thin hands clasping and unclasping; "to get an opening—that is all you want."

"But you require to be very clever, Bertie," said Lady Randolph, gravely disapproving, "to make

anything by writing. I have heard people say in society—"

"No," said the young man, "not at all, it is only a knack; there is nothing that costs so little trouble. You want training for every other profession, but anybody can write. I think I know what I am about."

Then there was a momentary silence. Mrs. Russell looked at her son with wistful admiration, not unmingled with a furtive and painful doubt, while Lady Randolph contemplated him with a severity which was resentful, as if poor Bertie's pretensions did her, or anyone else, any harm. This pause, which was somewhat embarrassing, was broken by Jock, whose small voice, suddenly uplifted, startled them all.

"Is it stories he writes, Lucy? I would like to learn to write stories. I think I will stay here," he said. But Jock was confused by the attention attracted by his utterance, and the faces of all those grown-up people turned towards him. "I can't write at all yet," he said, growing very red, planting himself firmly against Lucy, and facing the company, half apologetic, half defiant. Between pothooks and novels there is a difference; but why should not the one branch of skill be learned as well as the other? Jock knew no reason why.

CHAPTER XXI.

POWER.

THIS visit made a turning point in Lucy's life. She returned home very thoughtful, more serious than usual —a result which seemed very easily comprehensible to her experienced friend. To part with her little brother was another trial for the girl; what wonder that it should bring back the grief that was still so fresh? Lucy said nothing about it; which was quite like her, for she was not a girl who made much show of her feelings. But it was not either her past sorrow, or the present "trial" of parting with Jock that moved Lucy —something else worked in her mind. The very sight of the poor household with all its anxieties, the struggle for existence which was going on, the hopes most likely to produce nothing but disappointment, struck a new chord in her. She was more familiar with the level of common-place existence on which they were struggling to hold their place, than with the soft and costly completeness of life on Lady Randolph's lines. The outside aspect of the house had carried her back to the Terrace; the busied and somewhat agitated maid who opened the door, unaccustomed to such fine company, the flutter and flurry of expectation throughout the house, no one knowing who it was who had come, but all expecting some event out of the way—had made Lucy smile with sympathy, yet blush to think that such an insignificant personage as herself was the stranger received with so much excitement. So far Lucy knew and recognised the state of feeling in the

house; but she had never known that struggle of poverty which was everywhere visible, and it went to her heart. This occupied all her thoughts as she went back; and when she got home she disappeared into her own room for a long time, somewhat to the surprise of Lady Randolph, who, as so often happens, was specially disposed for her young companion's society. Lucy sent even Jock away. She dispatched him with Elizabeth, her maid, to buy something he would want before going to school; and bringing her little old-fashioned desk to her little sitting-room, sat down with it before the fire. It was a cold day, though bright, and Lucy thought, with pain that was almost personal, of the sputtering of the newly lighted fire in Mrs. Russell's cold drawing-room, and of all the signs of poverty about. Why should people be so different? She opened the desk, which was full of little relics of her girlhood; little rubbishy drawings which the other girls, at Mrs. Stone's, had done for her; and even little French exercises and virtuous essays of her own, all religiously put away. The desk was a very common little article, opening in two unequal divisions, so as to form a blue velvet slope on which to write; a thing much more adapted to be laid out upon one of the little tables in the Terrace drawing-room than to have a place here, where everything was so much more refined.

But all Lucy's little secrets reposed under that blue velvet; and in a drawer which shut with a spring, and was probably called secret, there was a packet of much more importance than Lucy's little souvenirs. She opened it with tremulous care. It was a bundle of memoranda in her father's hand-writing, done up

with a bit of string as was his way. He had tied them up himself, directing her to read them over frequently. Lucy had never touched the sacred packet up to this moment; her awe had been greater than her curiosity. Indeed, there had been little ground for curiosity, for she had heard him read, as they were written, all these scraps which were the studies for his great work of art, the will, into which old Mr. Trevor had concentrated his mind, and the meaning of his life. She had heard them, listening very dutifully; but yet it was as if she had not heard at all, so lightly had they floated over her—so little had she thought of them. She had been entirely acquainted with all his plans for her, and all the serious occupations he had planned out; but she had taken them calmly for granted, as things not affecting her for the moment. Now, however, quite suddenly, Lucy realised that she was not a helpless person, but powerful for aid and assistance to her fellow-creatures even now, young as she was. She gave but one glance, half smiling, to Maude Langton's drawings, and Lily Barrington's pin-cushion, and the pen-wiper made for her by Katie Russell; then took out her little bundle of scrappy papers—the string of which she untied carefully and with difficulty, with a reverent thought of the old man whose withered fingers had drawn it so tight. It was with some difficulty that Lucy found, among the many memoranda in her hands, the one she sought. They were all embodied in the will. She found the stipulations about her residence, half in high-life, half in what Mr. Trevor called a middling way. And about her marriage, an event so distant and improbable, that Lucy smiled again in maiden

calm, wholly fancy free, as the word met her eye. At last here it was. She shut the others carefully into the desk, and began to read. And it was so remarkable a document that it will not be amiss if we give it here. This, as we have said, was but the memorandum, the rough draft, afterwards put into more formal language, in the will itself.

"The fortune which my daughter Lucy is to inherit, having been made by her uncle James Rainy, as may be said, out of nothing, that is to say, without any but the smallest bit of money to begin with, all by his own industry and clear-headedness—and very honestly made, though perhaps not without being to the detriment here and there of another person, not so clever as he was—it is my desire that his heiress should *give back* a part of it to her fellow-creatures, from whom it came. For, however honestly money is made, it is quite clear, to anybody that will examine the question, that if it is nothing more than buying in the cheapest market and selling in the dearest, it must always be taking something off the comfort of other people. The best of men can't do less than this; and I am sure James Rainy was one of the best of men. But as it came out of nothing, and out of the pockets of other people, I think it but right that James Rainy's niece should give it *back*. A part of it, that is to say; I wish it clearly to be understood that the half of the Rainy property, whatever it may amount to when I die—and I hope I have been able to add a little by great attention to business, and giving up my whole thoughts to it—is to be kept intact, and not to be touched in any way, making a very good fortune for Lucy and her

heirs for ever. But the other half she shall be free to dispose of, giving it back to the community, out of which it came. Foreigners are not to be eligible, though part of it was no doubt made out of foreigners; but the kind that come fluttering about rich folks in England, and carrying off a great deal of our money, are not the kind among whom James Rainy made his fortune; and I say again foreigners are not to be eligible. Most people would say that having a great deal of money to give away, the thing to do would be to establish hospitals, and give large subscriptions; but I don't believe in subscriptions for my part. Besides that is the common way. What I want Lucy to do, is to give the money to individuals or families whom she comes across, those that really want it. I wish her to remember that I don't tell her to do this in order to please herself, nor to make herself look like a great personage, nor to get applause or even gratitude. Applause she is not to get, since this part of my will I require to be kept secret as far as possible, and every gift to be kept an absolute secret from all but my executors, and the receivers of the bounty; and gratitude she must not expect. It is a poor thing to look for it, and I don't much believe in it for my part. What she has to do is a simple duty, having a great deal more money than she can ever know what to do with. And she is not to give little dribbles of money which encourage pauperism; but when she sees a necessity to give enough, liberally, and without grudging. If it's to a man to set him up in business, or help him on in whatever his trade may be; and if it's a woman, to give her an income that she can live on, and bring up her children upon, with economy and good manage-

ment. I don't want anyone to get damage by what she gives, as happens when you give a ten pound note, or a fifty, or even a hundred. Let her give them enough—she has plenty to draw upon—according to their position and what they are used to; capital that can be of real use in business, or an income that can be managed, and made the most of. It is giving the money back to those from whom it came. I also require that my daughter Lucy should be left the fullest liberty of choice. She must satisfy my executors that the case is a necessitous one; but nothing more. She is not bound to give guarantees of any kind, or a good character even, or testimonials from other people. The thing is to be between herself and those she gives to. She will make many mistakes, but she is very sensible, and she will learn in time.

I further stipulate that my said daughter Lucy is to enter upon the possession of this right as soon as I am dead, whether she is of age at that period or not. I expect of her obedience to all my rules for seven years, as far as regards herself; but in this particular she is to be perfectly free, and no one is to have any power of control over her—neither her guardians, nor her husband when she gets one. This is my last wish and desire."

She had known vaguely that this was how it was; but when Lucy had heard the paper read by her father's own lips, she had not paid very much attention to it. It was so far away—so unlike anything that lay in her placid girlish life, which, at that time, had no power whatever in it, except to buy Jock a new book now and then out of her pocket-money. Lucy fancied

she could see herself sitting quiet and unmoved over her knitting, listening as a matter of duty, not thinking much of what it was that papa wrote down in these interminable papers. How placidly she had taken it all! It had been nothing to her; though she had received from him a cartain gravity of reflection, and sense of the incumbrances and responsibilities of her wealth, yet that had come chiefly since his death, and she recalled the easy calm of her own mind before that event with surprise. Now as she read these words over again, which had floated so calmly over her before, a thrill of warm life and excitement ran through her being. She had it in her power to change all that, to make poor Mrs. Russell comfortable, to lift her up above all necessity. Was it possible? Lucy's heart began to beat, her mind trembled at the suggestion—it made her head giddy. That nervous, tremulous woman so full of self-betrayals, letting the spectators see against her will how anxious she was, how full of fear, even in professing herself to be full of hope. Was it possible that a word from Lucy would smooth away half of her incipient wrinkles, correct the anxious lines round the corners of her eyes, and calm her whole agitated being? Lucy felt her head go round and round with that sense of delightful incomprehensible power. She could do it, there was no doubt or question; and how willing she would be to do it, how glad, how eager! She put her papers back again, with her whole frame tingling and in commotion. A girl is seldom so excited, except by something about a lover, some shadow of the new life coming over her, some revelation of the mysteries and sweetnesses to come; but Lucy had never been awakened on this subject.

She knew nothing about love, and cared less, if that can be believed; but the very breath was taken away from her, and her head made giddy by this sudden consciousness of power.

Next day Lucy had a visitor, in the morning, before there was any question of visitors, when she and Jock were seated alone. It was Mary Russell, with a little flush on her face, and somewhat breathless, who appeared behind the maid when the door opened. Mary was the plainest one of the family, a girl with a round cheerful face, and no special beauty of any kind, not like her handsome brother, who had the air of a man of fashion, or Katie, who was one of the prettiest girls at Mrs. Stone's. It was not Mary's *rôle* to be pretty; she was the useful one of the family. In most cases there is one member of a household specially devoted to this part; and if it had happened that Mary had grown up beautiful, as sometimes happens, no doubt her claims would have been steadily ignored by the rest of the family, who thought of her in no such light. She was the one who did what the others did not like to do. She came in with a little hesitation, with a blush and shy air of deprecating anxiety. The blush deepened as she met Lucy's surprised look; she sat down with an awkwardness that was not natural to her. She was scarcely seventeen, younger than Lucy; but had already learned so much of the darker side of life. Yet there was in Mary none of the self-contrasts, nor the anxious adulation of her mother. She had so much to do, she had not time to think how much worse off she was than this other girl, her contemporary in life.

"I came to see—when it would suit you to send—

Master Trevor," Mary said, faltering a little. "Mamma feared—that perhaps you might be discouraged by seeing that the house was not—— But I will see that he is very well taken care of, and—regular with his lessons. I am always with them. It is a holiday today, that is why I have come out."

(The family had taken fright after Lucy had gone; they had doubted the possibility of so much good-fortune coming their way; they had trembled with apprehension lest a letter should reach them next morning informing them that some other school had been recommended to Lady Randolph, or that Miss Trevor feared that the air of the Heath would be too keen for her little brother; and Mary had as usual put herself in the breach. "I will go and find out," she had said, "they cannot eat me, at the very worst." This was Mary's way; the rest of the house waited and fretted, and made all around them miserable, but she preferred to cut the knot.)

"You see, Miss Trevor," she continued, "mamma is very anxious to get a good connection. I do not care so much, for my part; but it is gentlemen's sons she wants, and she thinks that if we were known to have your brother——"

"But I am nobody," said Lucy, "and Jock is—— Papa was only a schoolmaster himself. He was not even a grand schoolmaster. He taught the common people; and I don't think that having Jock would make much difference."

Mary looked at her with wistful eyes.

"He is your brother," she said.

"But, indeed, indeed I am nobody," cried Lucy, "scarcely a lady at all, only allowed to live here, and

be well thought of, because I have a great deal of money. I am not so good as you are; even Katie, though she was known to be poor, they said at school, 'She is one of the Russells.' Now that could never be said of me; I am not one of the anybodys," Lucy said, with a little smile. "I have nothing but my money," she added, eyeing Mary with great earnestness, "*it* is good for something; there are some things, indeed, that *it* can do," here she paused, and looked at the other girl again, very doubtfully, almost anxiously. Mary did not know what it meant. She had come as a supplicant, wistfully desirous of making a good impression upon the rich and fortunate heiress. Only to be connected in the most superficial way with this favourite of fortune would do them good, her mother thought. But she was deeply puzzled by Lucy's look at her, which was wistful too.

"Yes, there is a great deal that it can do," said Mary. "When one has so very, very much, it is as good as being born a princess. It is better to be of a good family when you have only a little, but when you are as rich as—as an 'Arabian Night,' what does it matter? Other boys would come from other prosperous places, if it were known that you had brought your brother."

"I wish," cried Lucy, "oh, I wish!—that I could do more than that."

Mary's cheeks grew crimson; she tried to laugh.

"That is all we want, Miss Trevor. We want only a good connection, and to get our school known."

In a moment the characters of the two girls had changed; it was the heiress that was the supplicant. She looked very anxiously in the other's eyes, who, on

her side, understood somehow, though she knew nothing about it.

"We are getting on," said Mary, with that flush of generous pride and courage; "oh, I am not afraid we shall get on! There may be a struggle at the beginning; everybody has a struggle; but we have only got to stand firm, and not to give in. Mamma gets frightened, but I am not a bit frightened; besides, she is not strong, and when people are not strong everything tells upon them. Of course we shall have a struggle —how could it be otherwise—there are so many poor people in the world! but in the end all will come right; and, Miss Trevor," she added, with a little flush of excitement, "if you don't think our house is good enough, never mind. We should like to know, but I don't wish to urge you, if you are not satisfied. We don't want any to come who is not satisfied; all the same we shall get on."

Lucy looked at her almost with envy.

"Yes," she said, shaking her head, following out her own thoughts, "I suppose it is true that there are a great many poor people in the world."

"Oh, so many!" Mary said; "poor women struggling and struggling to live; though we are struggling ourselves, it makes my heart sore; there are so many worse off than we are. But we must get on, whatever happens, I tell mamma so; what is the use of fretting, I say, all will come right in the end; but she cannot keep her heart up. It is because she is not strong," Mary said, a tear coming furtively to her eyes.

"I know what papa meant now," said Lucy. "I had never thought of it. It is a sin for one to have so much, and others nothing. If it could only be taken

and divided, and everybody made comfortable—so much to you, and so much to me, and everyone the same—how much better, how much happier! but how am I to do it?" she said, clasping her hands.

Mary stood, opening her blue eyes, then laughed, with youthful ease and frankness, though far from free of tears. "How strange that you should say that! I thought it was only poor people and Radicals that said that. You can't be a Radical, Miss Trevor? But it would be no good," said the sensible girl, shaking her head; "even I have seen enough to be sure of that. If we had all the same one day, there would be rich and poor again the next. It is in people's nature. But this is a long way off from what I came to ask you," she said, dropping her voice with a little sigh.

Jock had been in the room all the time. He was one of the children whom no one ever notices, who hear everything, and bide their time. He came forward all at once, startling Mary, who turned to him in alarm with a little cry. "Are you fond of the 'Arabian Nights?'" he said. "I am not so very fond of them now—they are for when you are quite little;—when you don't know anything. When I come, I will tell you quantities of things, if you like. I can tell you all Shakespeare. I told Lucy: she does not know much," Jock said with genial contempt.

"Perhaps you will think I don't know very much: but I shall teach you your lessons," said Mary with tremulous satisfaction, yet a little pedagogic assertion of her own superiority. Jock looked at her with attention, studying this new specimen of the human race.

"You must not think he is naughty," said Lucy,

interposing eagerly. "He is a very good boy. Though he is so little, he knows a great deal. And he always understands. You may think he is a trouble with his stories, and the fairy books he has read. But he is no trouble," his sister cried, "he is the greatest comfort. I don't know what I should have done without Jock; and I am sure you will like him too. We are going to get him his things this afternoon, and to-morrow I am to bring him," Lucy added in her usual tranquil tones.

"Then that is all right," said Mary. She thought it was all her doing—that the question had been a doubtful one, and that it was the decided step she had taken which had secured this important little scholar. He was to pay better than any of the rest, and he was, it might be hoped, the first of a better connection. Mary got up to go home with a satisfaction in her supposed success, which was almost triumph. She did not envy Lucy, though she was an heiress. She saw a long perspective of new boys filing before her, and a handsome house and big play-grounds, and an orderly prosperous establishment. These were the things that were worth wishing for, Mary Russell thought. As for Bertie and his book, she shrugged her youthful shoulders at them. But she believed in herself, and in the little boys to come. "We shall have a struggle," she repeated with a smile, "as everybody has; but we shall get on." She did not envy Lucy; but Lucy, perhaps, feeling the tables turned, was not so magnanimous. She was half vexed that the success of the Russells was so certain, and that here was no case for her to interfere. Alas, there was nothing for her to do, but to wring her hands and stand helpless

upon her mountain of money, while all those poor people, whom Mary knew, struggled unaided—yet "got on" at last, without any help of hers.

CHAPTER XXII.

HOW THE RUSSELLS GOT ON.

LUCY was permitted to take Jock to Hampstead by herself in Lady Randolph's brougham next day. They had spent the morning buying things for him, a school-boy dressing-case, a little desk, various books, and an umbrella; possessions which, up to this time, had been considered too valuable for the child, of whom nobody took any special care. He went to his new home with such an abundance of property as elated even Jock, though he was not given to trivialities. He had a watch too, which was more than property, which was a kind of companion, a demi-living thing to console him when he should be dull; and the child bore up with great heroism in face of the inevitable parting. Indeed, Jock regarded the whole matter in an extremely practical common-sense way. Lucy herself was disposed to be tearful during the long drive. She held him close to her side, with her arm round him. "You will be good, Jock?" she said; "you will not be silly and read books, but do your lessons and your sums, and everything. Promise me that you will do your lessons, Jock."

Jock eyed his sister with that indulgent contempt which her want of discrimination often produced in him. "Of course I will do my lessons," he said; "it

is you who are silly. What else should I go away for? People must do lessons, it appears, before they grow up. If I didn't mean to do them," Jock said, with a full sense of his own power of deciding his fate, "I should stay at home—I shouldn't go."

This silenced Lucy for the moment; but she was not so confident as he was. "When you get dull, dear, and when there is nobody to talk to, and when you begin to feel lonely—" The tears got into Lucy's eyes again, as she added line after line to this picture; "then I am afraid, I am afraid! you will begin to read, you will forget about everything else."

Jock drew himself away from her arm with a little offence; he looked at her severely. "I am not just a baby—or a girl;" he said, indignantly. Then he added, softening, "And I don't mean to be dull. I will tell Mary a great deal. It will do her good. You don't mind so much about things, when you have a great many other things in your head."

Once more this oracular utterance silenced his sister for the moment; and then with natural inconsistency she resented his philosophy. "I did not think you were so changeable. You are quite pleased to have Mary; you don't care for leaving me. It is I that will be lonely, but you don't mind a bit!" cried Lucy. Jock sighed with the impatience which his elders so often show when a woman is unreasonable. "Don't you *want* me to learn my lessons then?" he said.

But as this protest was uttered the carriage drew up before Mrs. Russell's house, where all was expectation, though there was no peeping at windows or signs of excitement, as on the first visit. The drawing-room, which was like poor Mrs. Russell herself, limp and

crumpled with the wear and tear of life rather than old, had been rubbed and dusted into such a measure of brightness as was possible. There was a pot of crocuses at the window, and tea upon the table; and the whole family were assembled to do honour to the visitor. There was nothing slipshod about Bertie now; his hair was carefully brushed, all the details of his appearance anxiously cared for. "For who can tell what may happen?" his mother said; "we never know what an hour may bring forth;" and inspired by this pious sentiment she had counselled Bertie, nothing loth, to buy himself a new necktie. His whole life might be altered by the becomingness of its tint and the success of its arrangement. Do not girls perpetually take these little precautions? and why not young men too? And they all stood up to receive Lucy, and regarded her with a kind of admiring adoration. "Give Miss Trevor this chair—it is the most comfortable." "Mother, a little more cream for Miss Trevor, and some cake." They could not do too much for her. "Katie is so happy that we have seen you; she writes to me this morning, that all will go well with us now we know her dear, dear Lucy." "We have all known you by name so long," Bertie added; "it has been familiar in our mouths as household words." Lucy was abashed by all this homage; but how could she help being a little pleased too? Mary was the only one who did not chime in. "I suppose Katie thinks you lucky," she said; "I don't believe in luck myself." And then Lucy made a little timid diversion, by asking about Mr. Bertie's book. Was it finished yet? and would it soon be published? It is pleasant to be courted and applauded; but somewhat embarrassing when it goes too far.

"He has not got a publisher yet; is it not strange," cried Mrs. Russell, indignantly, "that, whatever genius you may have, or however beautifully you may write, it is all nothing, nothing at all, without a publisher? He may be just an ignorant man, just a tradesman—not in the least able to understand; indeed I hear that they are dreadful people, and cheat you on every side (and authors are a great deal too generous and too heedless, Miss Trevor, they allow themselves to be cheated); but however beautiful your book may be (and Bertie's book is lovely) not one step can he move, not one thing can he do, till one of these common dreadful men—oh!" cried the indignant mother; "it is a disgrace to our age—it is a shame to the country—"

"They are necessary evils," said Bertie, with magnanimity; "we can't do without them. You must not think it quite so bad, Miss Trevor, as my mother says. And after all one is independent of them, as soon as one has got a hearing; *ce n'est que le premier pas*—"

"If Lady Randolph chose, she might easily get him an introduction," said Mrs. Russell; "but it is out of sight out of mind, Miss Trevor. When you do not want anything, there are numbers of people ready to help you; but when you do— Lady Randolph might do it in a moment. It would not cost her anything; but she forgets; when you are out of the way everybody forgets."

"We must not say that, mother. It was she who brought us our celestial visitor."

"That is true, that is true," Mrs. Russell cried.

Lucy did not know what to think, or how to reply; she had never been called a celestial visitor before, and

it was impossible not to be pleased by all this kindness and admiration. But then it was embarrassing, and she saw Mary in the background laugh. She felt half disposed to laugh too, and then to cry; but that was because she was parting with Jock, who, little monster, did not shed a tear. Lucy dried her own eyes almost indignantly; but even on her side the effect of the parting was broken by the assiduous attentions with which she was surrounded. She was so confused by having to take Bertie's arm, and thus being conducted to the door, and put into the carriage, that she could not give Jock that last hug which she had intended. Mrs. Russell stood on the steps, and kissed her hand. "You will come soon again, come as often as you can. You will do us all good, as well as the little brother;" Mrs. Russell said. And Bertie put his head into the carriage to tell her that he would come himself and bring her news of Jock. They both spoke, and looked as if Lucy were indeed a celestial visitor, a being of transcendent excellence and glory. She could not but be conscious of a bewildering sense of pleasure; but she was ashamed of so much devotion. She was not the least worthy of it. Could they be laughing at her? but why should anyone be so cruel as to do that?

For the moment, however, all Lucy's personal excitement in the consciousness of being able to change the circumstances of the poor lady, who had at first sight appealed so strongly to her sympathies, was subdued, and turned into the humiliation and shame of an officious person who has been offering unnecessary aid. She shrank back into herself with a hot blush. Had she, perhaps, wanted to appear as a great benefactor in the eyes of the Russells? was it pride rather than pity?

Lucy, though she had so little experience, was wise enough to know that undesired help is an insult, a thing that everybody resents. She was deeply disappointed and ashamed, not knowing how to excuse herself for her rash impulse of liberality, liberality which these high-spirited and hopeful people would most likely never have forgiven her for thinking of. She locked away her father's memoranda again in the secret drawer.

"Oh, papa! papa!" she said to herself, "how could you think it would be so easy?"

He had thought money was everything, but it was not what he thought. Lucy was glad that she had not written to Mr. Chervil about it, as she had intended, for most likely he would have laughed at her, or perhaps been angry. Evidently the only thing for her to do was to "read," as Lady Randolph advised her, and try to learn German, and keep as quiet as possible. It was dull, very dull, without Jock, but Lucy was of a patient disposition, and reconciled herself gradually to her life.

On the whole however this life was a life full of pleasantness, to which the most exacting young person might easily have reconciled herself. Lady Randolph was very kind—indeed, as time went on, she got to like Lucy very sincerely, appreciating the good qualities of a girl who brought so much into the establishment and took so little out, who gave no trouble at all, as the servants said, rather despising her for it. But Lady Randolph did not despise her. She knew the value of a companion who was always contented, and aspired after no forbidden pleasures of society, and did not so much as understand the A B C of flirting. Such a girl

was of rare occurrence in the world, or, at least, so persons of experience, accustomed to think the worst of all classes of their fellow-creatures, said. A girl who was always willing to do what she was told, and who set up no will of her own, and had no confidential visitor, except Mr. Chervil, who was one of her legal guardians, was a charge with whom any chaperon might be pleased; provided all went as well next year, when Lucy came out! but Lady Randolph piously reflected that no one could tell what might happen before that. Lucy excited no strong feeling: there was little in her (except her fortune) to take hold of the imagination; but her quiet presence was always soothing and pleasant. Lady Randolph professed to go little into society that season, "saving herself up," as she said, for the next, when it would be her more arduous duty to take Lucy out. But though she did not go out much, that did not prevent her from enjoying a great many dinner-parties, and even occasionally "looking in" upon some dear duchess's ball; and Lucy spent many quiet evenings at home, in which her chief amusement was to hear the carriages of the people who were enjoying themselves roll up and down the street, and in wondering how she would like it next year, when she would be enjoying herself too. She did not at all dislike these quiet evenings, and, on the whole, her life passed very pleasantly, as the Spring grew into Summer, and the season came to its prime. She rode in the morning, sometimes in the Park, when Lady Randolph could find suitable companions for her, and often going as far as Hampstead, where Mary Russell looked out upon her from the schoolroom window with cheerful friendliness; and Bertie, not very sure of his skill, came out

to put her on her horse when she was ready to go, and bit his young moustache with envy and anger against fate, which had denied him all such indulgences. Bertie, however, was buoyed up by a great confidence; his book was going through the press: he had got the opening he wanted; and presently, presently! he said to himself, his time of humiliation would be over. Lucy had no idea of the effect of her visits upon the household. The little pupils, who were not very answerable to Mary's rule, hearing it often called in question, ran to the window when they heard the sound of the horses' feet, and they too looked with envy upon little Jock, who now had a pony, and frequently went out with his sister. The little boys looked after Jock, some with admiring eyes, while others scowled at his unusual privileges.

"Why has that little beggar got a pony and us not?" the urchins would say, indignantly; and Mrs. Russell was not, with all her refinement, much better than the boy who said this, who was the son of the grocer, taken on reciprocal terms, and whose presence was felt to be a humiliation to the establishment. Mrs. Russell never saw Lucy ride away without drying her eyes.

"To think *my* girls should be toiling while old Trevor's daughter——!" She looked out eagerly for Lucy's coming, but this was the unfailing sentiment with which she greeted her. "The ways of Providence are inscrutable," the poor lady said, "when I remember her mother, who was nothing but nursery-governess at the Brown-Jones's, an old maid! when we used to call in mamma's carriage."

"If you were so much better off than her mother,

she has a right to be better off than we are; it is only justice and fair-play," said Mary.

"Oh, child! child! hold your tongue! what can you know about it?" her mother said, with red eyes, while Bertie gnawed his moustache.

The young man stood and looked after Lucy, waiting to wave his hand to her as she turned the corner. She looked very well on horseback. If he had not felt that indignant envy of her, that sense that a trumpery bit of a girl had no right to be so much better off than he, he would have almost admired Lucy as she rode away. She was the representative of so many things that he did admire: wealth, luxurious ease, an undeniable superiority to all care. That she should be set up on that pinnacle, high enough to impress the whole world with her greatness, while he, clever, and handsome, and well born, attracted attention from nobody, was one of those things which are so incredible in their inappropriateness as to fill the less fortunate with indignant astonishment; but presently, presently! the young man said to himself. Meantime he was very irregular in giving the little boys their Latin. The proofs took up a great deal of his time, and it was scarcely to be expected that a young author, on the verge of success and fame, could be as particular, in respect to hours, as a nameless pedagogue. Mrs. Russell fully felt the force of this argument. She did not see how Bertie could be expected to give himself up to the children every day. The Latin lessons came down to three times, then twice a week, and it was never quite certain when it might suit Mr. Russell to give them. "They shall have another half-hour with me at their music, or, Mary, give them a little

more geography; geography is very important, of far more consequence, at their age, than Latin," the head of the establishment would say; and though the sight of Miss Trevor arriving on her fine horse, with her groom behind her, had a great effect upon the neighbourhood, and the parents of the day-scholars were pleased to think that their little boys were at the same school as this fine young lady's brother, yet after a while there were remonstrances from these commonplace people. The boys, they complained, did not "get on." "What do they mean by getting on? we are not bound to furnish intellects to our pupils," Mrs. Russell said, assuming something of the same imperiousness which answered with Mrs. Stone; but, alas! it did not answer at Hampstead, and but for the hope of that book which was coming out directly, the poor lady would have seen a very dismal prospect before her. But the book was to make amends for everything, it was to bring both money and peace.

"There is another boy gone;" said little Jock. "I'm very glad, he was one that laughed when you talked of anything. I told him about Macbeth, and he laughed. He's gone, that fellow; and Shuckwood's going—"

"They seem all to be going," said Lucy, alarmed.

"Oh no, you know there's me. I'm the sheet anchor, they say; but what is a sheet-anchor? She is often crying now," said Jock; "I can't tell why. It can't be because of the fellows leaving. They are a set of little—cads."

"Jock, where did you learn such words? you never spoke like that before."

"Oh, it is being with those fellows," said Jock.

"If I were bigger I'd lick half of them; but I couldn't lick half," he added, reflectively, "for there's only five now, and when Shuckwood is gone, and the one with the red hair, there will be three. But then one is me! there will only be two others left. You know, Lucy, Russell, the man himself, Mary's brother, has made a book, and it's all in print."

"Yes, I know. I hope he will make some money by it, and make poor Mrs. Russell more happy."

"Money!" This was an idea Jock could not fathom; he pondered it for a time, but did not arrive at any clear comprehension of it. "Will he go and knock at all the doors, and sell it like—the milkman?" asked the child, with much doubt in his tone. The milkman was striding cheerfully along with his pails, uttering a mysterious but friendly howl at every door, and furnishing Jock with the simile. He thought the milkman a very interesting person, but he did not realise Bertie Russell in the same trade. "I don't think he would do it," Jock said confidentially, "and if it was only one book, it would not be much good. I should like to be a pedlar with a heap of books; then you could read the rest, and sell them when you had finished them. But, Lucy," cried the child, "what I would like best of all would be to ride on, and on, and on, like this, and never stop, except at night, to lie on the grass and tell stories, like that book about the Knight and the Squire; and the Manciple. What is a manciple?" Jock asked, suddenly impressed by the charms of the unknown word.

"I can't tell in the least, I never heard of it. Jock, doesn't it vex poor Mrs. Russell when the boys go?"

"When the fellows leave? oh, I don't know. I tell

you they're not much of fellows; I don't see why she should care," said the little ignoramus, serenely. "I wish they were all gone, then Mary would have time to improve her mind."

"Poor Mary! has she so much to do?"

"She is always having the fellows for something. When we have not Latin we have geography, and we don't often have Latin. Russell, he's busy, or he's got a headache. The fellows say——"

"What little gossips! Tell me what Latin you have learned, Jock."

"Oh, nothing at all. Penn-a, penn-ah—or perhaps it's penn-ah—penn-a, I never can remember. It is far easier just to say pen, as you do, Lucy. And then we have counting; two times three is six, three times three—— I'll tell you that another time; the pony jumps about when I try to do arithmetic in my head."

"But they are always very good to you, Jock? you are happy there?" this was the burden of all their talks, the constantly recurring chorus.

This time Jock, who usually said "Oh, yes," with great indifference to the question, laughed, which was rare with him.

"She says I am always to say Mr. Bertie is very kind," said Jock. "That's Russell, you know; the fellows all call him Russell. She says, when you ask, I am to say he takes great pains with me."

Lucy was perplexed, but it was not right to show her perplexity, she thought.

"And does he?" she said.

"I don't know what it means, he never says anything at all. Do you think, if we were to ride long enough, we could ride, ride, right into the sun, Lucy?

there where it touches the Heath, look! The sky *must* touch somewhere, if we could only ride as far."

"Let us try," said Lucy.

Jock's revelations were very unsatisfactory. It was just as sensible, she thought, to pursue the sunshine, and follow the point where the sky must touch, as to get any light thrown upon the one point which she was anxious to investigate. Lucy's mind had been greatly exercised upon this subject. It was impossible to mistake the sign of growing poverty and squalor in the house, and she, who felt that she had in her hand the power of turning anxiety and trouble into ease, was greatly disturbed, not knowing what to do.

Mrs. Russell's eyes were generally red now; but then they were weak, she said; and the house got to look more and more untidy. It was a begrimed little maid who opened the door, and the red-haired boy was gone, and the one who squinted, and the little fellow with the curls. Lucy went in with her brother, when they had finished their ride, and was met by the mistress of the house, all tremulous, clasping and unclasping her hands, with a nervous smile.

"You must rest a little, Miss Trevor," she said, "after your long ride, and take something; won't you take something? I have made a little space in the drawing-room," she added, seeing, with the quick instinct of the unfortunate, that Lucy's eye had been caught by the big vacancy in the room, which had never been too full of furniture; "my poor piano, it was too big, much too big. I did not like to part with it, it was a relic of the days when—my rooms were not so small," she said, with a pretence at a smile. "But you will be glad to hear, Miss Trevor, we have

heard of a much better house, when—I mean as soon as—we are quite sure about the book."

"It will not be long now?" said Lucy. "Mr. Bertie told me the printing was very nearly done."

"No, it will not be long. We might take it now, for that matter, for I don't entertain any doubt on the subject. But Bertie is always so modest. Bertie insists that we must make quite sure. You see, Miss Trevor, a work like his, a work of imagination, succeeds at once, if it is going to succeed," she added, with a little laugh. "Other kinds of books may take a long time to gain the public ear, but that—one knows directly. So I say to Bertie, we really might venture. It is just round the corner, Miss Trevor, a much larger, handsomer house. But, on the other hand, this is a long way from the centre of everything. It might be better to move into Mayfair, or even Belgravia. He will want to be nearer the world. So, on the whole, we think it best to wait a little: and it does not do to move in the season, everything is so dear."

"And the little boys?" said Lucy. Her mind was bewildered by the contrast between what she was hearing, and the visible signs of misery around.

"Oh," said Mrs. Russell, "as for Jock, you must not trouble yourself in the least. We are quite fond of him, he is such a little original. And Mary is very independent-minded; she will never take anything from her brother, though a better brother never existed! Mary will want something to occupy her, and so long as I have a roof over my head, little Jock shall never want a home. You may be quite easy on that point. I am telling Miss Trevor, Mary, that we are

thinking of removing," she said, as her daughter came in.

Mary did not look in high spirits.

"Are you, mamma? I should not mind the house, if other things were comfortable," Mary said. Her eyes were heavy, as if she had been weeping, and she avoided Lucy's look.

"That is because some of the little boys are going away," said Mrs. Russell, nervously. "Mary is always so anxious. We shall be glad to be rid of them, my love, when Bertie's book is out."

Mary did not make any reply. She gave her shoulders an imperceptible shrug; and what between the daughter's unresponsiveness, and the mother's tearful and restless profusion of words, Lucy did not know what to say. When she went out, Bertie appeared with his hat on, and a packet of papers in his hand, and walked by her as she rode slowly along the steep little street. "These are the last of the proofs," he said to her, holding them up. "I am going to take them myself for luck. I hope you will think of me kindly, Miss Trevor, and wish me well."

"Indeed, I will. I wish it may be—the greatest success that ever was."

"Thanks, that should bring me good fortune. I want you to do me a favour too. Let me give it all the better chance by putting your happy name upon it. I am sure it is a happy name, a lucky name, bringing good," he added fervently, "to all who invoke it."

"Indeed, Mr. Russell," said Lucy, troubled. "I do not know what you mean."

"I want," he said, "to dedicate it to you."

"To me!" Lucy's simple countenance grew crimson. She did not quite understand the half pleasure, half repugnance that seemed, all at once, to flood her veins to overflowing. The colour rushed to her face. She was flattered, what girl would have been otherwise? But she was more embarrassed than flattered. "Oh, no! Mr. Russell, please not. It is too much, I have no right to such a compliment."

"Then I don't know who has," he said. "You sought us out when we were very low, and gave us courage. That was the thing we wanted most. My mother is not encouraging, Miss Trevor. She is very good; but she is so anxious — so easily cast down."

"She is in very great hopes now, Mr. Russell."

"Oh, yes! poor mother—too great. I don't know what she thinks is coming. A fortune—a king's ransom. And she will be disappointed. I feel sure she will be disappointed—even if I succeed. I shall have to think of getting connections, forming friends, helping myself on in the world, instead of muddling always here."

Then there was a moment of silence, and the sound of the horse's hoofs on the stones came in, ringing in Lucy's ears. And these words raised up echoes of their own. Lucy's young soul got perplexed among them. But she said nothing, and after a moment he went on.

"Of course I will help them; but I must think of what is to be done next, and I must be in a place where I can see people—not out here. You are so reasonable, you will understand me, Miss Trevor. It is hard to be living among people who do not under-

stand. I will bring you one of the first copies, if you will let me—the very first, if I have my way," he said, looking up at her with a glow on his face. As she sat on her horse, swaying a little with the movement, she looked the most desirable thing in all the world to Bertie Russell. To think a girl the best thing you could become possessed of, the most valuable and precious, the highest prize to be aspired to, the creature who can bestow everything you most wish for—is not that being in love with her? If so, Bertie Russell was in love; and he looked at her as if he were so. Lucy's cheek was a little flushed with surprise, with the confusion of her thoughts, and he interpreted this so as to chime in with the excitement he had himself given way to. It was a genuine excitement. Heavens! if he could but win that girl to be his! what more would there be to wish for? He put out his hand and gently touched and stroked her horse's neck. This meant the most shy caress to herself, and Lucy felt it so, with a thrill of alarm she could not tell why.

"I am afraid I must go on now," she said, feeling a blush come over her face again; and he took off his hat, and stood watching as she quickened her pace along the road, calling after her, "I may come then, and bring the first copy?" His heart jumped up within him as he saw the colour on Lucy's face. Could she, in her turn, a simple girl not used to much attention, have fallen in love? If so, there would be nothing strange in that. A fine young fellow—a young man of genius about to blaze upon the world. Nothing could be more natural; but the idea made Bertie's heart beat. It would be the most fortunate — the

most desirable of all things? It opened up a perfect heaven of hope and blessedness before his feet.

As for Lucy, she rode home with her heart quaking and trembling and full of many thoughts. She did not entertain any doubt of the success of the book, any more than the author of it did, or his mother. But what she had heard from both sides opened Lucy's eyes. Poor Mrs. Russell! what wild fancy possessed her, making her so feverishly confident in the midst of all those signs of trouble? Youth is intolerant, yet Lucy was reasonable. She saw some excuse for Bertie too. And now her duty seemed to her very clear. After all her vicissitudes of feeling, she had come back to the starting point. This made her heart beat, not any thought of the handsome young author. She would have to tell Mrs. Russell herself of what she was about to do. It would be a difficult mission, Lucy thought to herself with something of a panic; yet it must be done. And when she thought of the house over which such a cloud of trouble and anxiety and approaching ruin seemed to hang, and of Mrs. Russell's excitement, and Mary's pale cheeks, her heart smote her for delaying. She must not allow her guardian to hold her hand, or her own timid spirit to shrink from her work. Would it not be better to have it done before the moment came when this poor woman would be undeceived? While she rode back through the suburban roads, Bertie subduing his pride, took the aid of an omnibus, and made his way to the publisher's—his head in the air, his mind full of ecstatic visions. He composed a hundred dedications as he rolled and rumbled along, smiling to himself at the idea of the

author of "Imogen" being seen on an omnibus. "Why not?" he asked himself. A man of genius, a future lord of society and the age, may go where he will without derogating from his dignity. If all went well, if all went as every indication proved it to be going, other vehicles than omnibuses were waiting for Bertie, golden chariots, cars of triumph. His present humility was a pleasantry at which he could not choose but smile.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE DEDICATION.

A VERY short time after this Lucy received the parcel of books which had been promised her. The season was growing to its height, and no time had been lost in putting the three volumes into the flimsy cloth binding which places the English novel on a platform of respectability, elevated far above its contemporary of other nations. The author did not bring her the first copy with his own hands, as he had vowed to do. Bertie had been afraid—he had done a thing which was perhaps too daring, and he did not venture to appear in his own person, to meet (perhaps) the storm of Lady Randolph's displeasure, perhaps the alarmed reproachfulness of Lucy herself. He sent it instead, and awaited the reply with a heart which could scarcely beat higher with any personal excitement, than it did with the tumult of hope and fear with which he awaited the issue of his first publication. It seemed to the inexperienced young fellow that the issues of life and death were in it, and that his fate would be fixed one way or another, and that without remedy. His doubt of Lucy's reception of his offering, therefore, added but a slight element the more to a tumult of feeling already almost too great to be controlled. He brought it himself to the door, but would not go in; leaving a message that the parcel was to be given to Miss Trevor at once. Lady Randolph and she, for a wonder, were dining alone, and the parcel was undone when the dessert was placed on

the table, and lay there in a very fashionably artistic binding, of no particular colour, with "Imogen" scrawled in large uneven letters on the side. The ladies both took it up with great interest. A new book, though so many of the community have ceased to regard it as anything but a bore, is still interesting more or less to every little feminine circle that knows the author. Lady Randolph was going out to a succession of parties after dinner, and among them to a great intellectual gathering, where all the wits were to be assembled. "I must tell Mrs. Montague about it," she said; "I must speak to everybody about it. It is very attentive of the young man to send it at once. We must do what we can for him, Lucy. We must ask for it at all the libraries, and tell everybody to ask for it, and I will speak to the critics. I will speak to Cecilia;" she said, taking up the first volume. But after a momentary interval, a change came over Lady Randolph's face. She uttered the invariable English monosyllable "Oh!" in startled and troubled tones; then turned upon her companion, hastily,

"Did you know of this, Lucy? My dear, my dear, how wrong! how imprudent! Why did not you mention it to me?"

Lucy was eating her strawberries very quietly, looking with a pleased expectation at the two other volumes of the book. It seemed to her a fine thing to be an author, to have actually written all that; and she was a little proud in her own person of knowing all about him, and felt that she would now have something to talk about when Lady Randolph's visitors tried her, as they were in the habit of doing, on divers subjects. When they talked to her about Lady Mary's small and

early party, or the Duchess's great assembly, Lucy had often found it embarrassing to repeat her humble confessions of ignorance to one after another, and to admit that she had not been there, or there; and did not understand the allusions which were being made; and she did not know enough about music to speak of the opera, nor about pictures to prattle about the exhibitions, as she heard other girls do; but now she would have something to say: "Have you seen the new novel? It is written by a gentleman we know;" with that to talk about Lucy felt that she might even take the initiative, and *begin* the conversation with anyone who did not look very clever and alarming, and this gave her a serene satisfaction. Also she was to spend the evening all by herself, and a new story was a nice companion. She was aroused from these agreeable thoughts by that "Oh-h!" uttered upon two or three notes by Lady Randolph, and looked up to see her friend's countenance entirely changed, severe as she had never seen it before. "Did you know of this? Why did you not mention it to me?" Lady Randolph said. She was holding out the book for Lucy's inspection, and the girl looked at it with instinctive alarm, yet all the calm of innocence. This was what she read:—

To the Angel of Hope,
LUCY,
to whose name in reverence
I prefix no title.
This first effort of a mind
which her gentle encouragement
has inspired with confidence
is Inscribed.

Lucy's eyes grew round with amazement, her lips dropped apart with consternation. She looked from the book to Lady Randolph and then to the book again. After a moment, the colour rushed to her face. "Lucy!" "Oh, you do not suppose he means *me*," she said, aghast.

"Whom could he mean else? Did you know anything about it? Lucy, don't let me think I am deceived in you," Lady Randolph said, with great vehemence. She was more excited than seemed necessary; but then, no doubt, she had a very serious sense of responsibility, in regard to a ward so precious.

"I am very sorry," said Lucy; "I suppose I do know; he said he would dedicate the book to me, and I said, oh no—don't do that; but then we spoke of something else, and I thought of it no more."

After a while Lady Randolph found herself capable of smiling, when she was fully convinced of the girl's innocence. "What a good thing you are not *out*, my dear. I can't be sufficiently thankful you are not out. You see by this, Lucy, what a dangerous thing it is to be kind to anybody. You, with your prospects, cannot be sufficiently careful. Have you ever thought that you are different from other girls? that there are reasons why I must take a great deal more care of you? I, who think girls ought always to be taken care of;" Lady Randolph said.

"I know that I have a great deal of money," said Lucy, quietly. "I suppose, Lady Randolph, that is what you mean?"

"My dear, if it were only in novels, you must have read that girls who have great fortunes are run after by all sorts of unworthy people; and innocent girls like

you are apt to be deceived when people are civil. Lucy, my love, this is a great deal too broad a compliment," said Lady Randolph, very solemnly, laying her hand upon the book; "you must not be taken in. No man who really cared for you, no *nice* man, would have held you up to the notice of society in this way."

"Cared for me?" said Lucy; "but I never supposed he did that. Why should he care for me?"

Lady Randolph looked at her charge with great perplexity of mind. Was this innocence, or was such simplicity credible? Had the girl never heard of fortune-hunters? All girls in society were aware of the dangers which attended an heiress; but Lucy had not been brought up in society. She did not know what to think; finally however, she determined that it was better, if they did not already exist there, to put no such ideas into the head of her *ingénue*. For Lady Randolph, who had no clue to the graver cares which occupied Lucy's mind, had not thought of her, as yet, in any character except that of *ingénue*. She stopped herself in the half completed sentence which she had began before this reflection came to her aid. "He must want you to think he cares—it is a beginning of ——" Here she stopped; and laughed uneasily. "No, no, I daresay I am wrong. It is my over-anxiety. Let us say it is only an indiscretion. Young men are always doing things which are *gauche* and inappropriate. And you have so much good sense, Lucy ——" Lady Randolph got up and came behind Lucy's chair, and gave her a hasty kiss. "I have perfect confidence in your good sense. You will not let your head be turned by fine words, as so many girls do?"

Lucy looked up with surprise at the haste and

almost agitated impulse of her careful guardian. Lady Randolph was dressed for her parties in black velvet and lace, with the *rivière* of diamonds which Lucy admired. She was a stately personage, imposing to behold; and yet, as she stood, somewhat excited, anxious and deprecating by the side of the little fair-haired girl in her black frock, Lucy felt a conviction of her own superior importance which was painful and humiliating to her. The uneasy sparkle in the eye, the glance of anxiety in the face of the lady, who in every natural point of view, was so much above herself, made her unhappy. How much money can do! Was it this, and this only which disturbed the balance between them, and made Lady Randolph's profession of faith in her sound as apologetic? She rose to follow upstairs with a confused sensation of pain. She had been trained, indeed, to think her fortune the chief thing in the world; but not in this point of view. The drawing-room was dim and cool, the windows all open, the night air blowing in over the boxes of mignonette and geranium in the balconies. The sounds from without came softened through the soft air, but yet furnished a distant hum of life, an intimation of the great world around, the mass of human cares and troubles and enjoyments which were in full career. Lady Randolph placed Lucy in her own chair by the table with the reading lamp, and gave her Bertie's book with a smile. "No, I don't think it will turn your head," she said, "read it, my love, and you will tell me to-morrow what you think of it. How I wish I could take you with me! and how much more I shall enjoy going out next year when you are able to go with me, Lucy!" She gave her another kiss with a little nervous enthusiasm,

and left the girl seated there in the silence with many wonderings in her mind. Lucy sat and listened with the novel in her hand while the carriage came to the door, and Lady Randolph drove away. Other carriages passed, drew up in the street below, took up and set down other fine people going here and there into the sparkling crowds of society. Many an evening before, Lucy had stolen behind the curtain to watch them with a country-girl's curiosity, pleased even to see the billowing train visible through a carriage window, which betrayed the fine evening toilettes within. But this evening she did not move from her chair. There was so little light in the room that the windows mysteriously veiled in filmy drapery added something from the dim skies outside to the twilight within. A shaded lamp stood in the back drawing-room, making one spot of brightness on a table. Her reading-lamp, with its green shade, condensed all the light it gave upon her hand with the book in it, resting upon her knee. But her face was in the dimness, and so were her thoughts. She was not so angry with Bertie as Lady Randolph had been, for his dedication. It was intended to be kind—what could it be but kind? Perhaps he had divined the attitude which, in intention at least, she had taken towards his family. Lucy's thoughts had never turned the way of love-making. She had not as yet encountered anyone who had touched her youthful fancy. It was no virtue on her part—she sat like one on the edge of the stream musing before she put her foot into the boat which might lead her—whither? But, in the meantime, the thoughts in her heart were all serious. Was she not pausing too long, lingering un-

duly upon the margin of her life—not doing the work which had been put into her hands to do?

Lucy had got so deep in these thoughts that she did not hear the noise and jar with which a hansom cab came to the door—or, at least, hearing it, paid no attention; for it is very difficult to discriminate in a street, whether a carriage is stopping at number ten or number eleven, and hansom cabs were not commonly heard at Lady Randolph's at night. Even the movement in the house did not rouse her; she had not the ease of a child in the family, though she was of so much importance in the house. She sat quite still, feeling by turns a refreshing breath steal over her from the windows, watching the flutter of the curtains, and the glimmer of the stars, which she could see through them, through the upper panes of the long windows; and vaguely amused by the suggestion furnished to her mind by the passing carriages, the consciousness of Society behind. She was so well entertained by this, and by her own thoughts which were many, that she had scarcely opened the book. She held it in her hand; she had looked again at the Dedication, feeling half flattered, half annoyed; and had read a page or two. Then, more interested, as yet, in her own story, or in this pause, so full of meaning and suggestion before it began, had closed again upon her fingers the new novel. Could anything in it be so wonderful as her own position; so full of that vague questioning which, in Lucy's mind, was more a state than a query. She dallied with the book, feeling herself a more present and a more important heroine than any imaginary Imogen.

Lucy did not even hear the door open. It was

opened very quietly far away in the dimness, at the other end of the room, and the new arrival stood looking in for, at least, a minute before he could make out whether any one was there. There was no light to show his own figure in the dark doorway, and he saw nothing except the lamp in the first room and the smaller one with its green shade, by which Lucy in her black dress was almost invisible. He paused for a minute, for he had been told that there was some one there. Then, with a bold step, he came in and closed the door audibly behind him. "Nobody, by Jove!" he said, an asseveration quite unnecessary; then threw himself into a chair, which stood in front of the table on which was the larger lamp. The sensation with which Lucy woke up to the discovery that a stranger, a *gentleman!* had come into the room, not seeing her, any more than till the moment when he became audible she had seen him, was one of the most extraordinary she had ever experienced. She raised herself bolt upright in her chair, half in alarm; but Lady Randolph's chairs, it need scarcely be said, did not creak, and Lucy's dress was soft with no rustle in it. "Nobody, by Jove!" the individual said; and nothing contradicted him. It seemed to Lucy that she instantly heard her own breathing, the beating of her watch, her foot upon the footstool, as she seemed to hear in exaggerated roundness and largeness of sound the *thud* with which he threw himself into that chair, the movement with which he drew it to the table, the grab he made across the table at a newspaper that lay there. "Well! here's the news at all events," the stranger said. As he stooped over the newspaper, his head came within the circle of the lamp. Lucy scarcely

dared to turn hers to look at him. There was the outline of head, a mass of hair, a large well-defined nose, a couple of large hands grasping the paper. Lucy's first impulse was half, but only half-alarm; but she was not at all nervous, and speedily reminded herself that it was very unlikely any dangerous or unlawful stranger should be able thus to make his way past Robinson, the butler, and George, the page, into Lady Randolph's drawing-room. There could not be anything to fear in him; but who was he, and how came he there? And what was Lucy to do? She sat as still as a mouse in Lady Randolph's chair and watched. Was it quite honourable to watch a man who was not aware of your presence? But then how to get away? Lucy did not know what to do. She felt more disposed to laugh than anything else; but dared not. Perhaps after a while he would go away. She held her breath and sat as still as a mouse. A *gentleman!* utterly unknown and appearing so suddenly in a feminine house—it was embarrassing; but certainly it was rather amusing too.

The stranger was not a quiet gentleman, whatever else he might be. How he pushed his chair about! how he flung the paper from one side to another! turning it over with resounding hums and hems! How could anyone be so noisy? Lucy, who was afraid to stir, watched him, ever more and more amused. At last he tossed the paper back upon the table. "News! not a scrap?" he said to himself, and suddenly throwing a large pair of arms over his head, gave such a yawn as shook the fragile London house. Did Lucy laugh? She feared that the smallest ghost of a giggle did burst from her in spite of herself. It seemed to

have caught his ear. He suddenly squared himself up, turned his chair round, and put on an aspect of listening. Lucy held her breath: he turned straight towards her and stared into the dimness. "By Jove!" he said again, to himself. The soft maze of curtains fluttered, the night air blew in. No doubt he thought it was these accidental sounds that had deceived him. But suspicion had evidently been roused in his mind. After a minute he rose, a large figure, making the house creak, and cautiously approached the window. He passed Lucy, who had shrunk back into her chair, and went beyond her to look out. One or two carriages were rolling along the street, and Lucy felt this was her opportunity, the way of retreat being now clear. She got up softly, with the utmost precaution, while he stood with his back to her, then turned to flee.

Alas! Lucy's calculations failed her; her foot caught the footstool, her book fell out of her hand with a noise that sounded like an earthquake, the stranger turned upon her as quick as lightning: and there she stood, blushing, laughing, confused, prettier than Lucy Trevor had ever looked in her life before.

"Oh, I beg your pardon!" she cried; and he said "By Jove!" taking out of his pockets the hands which had been thrust down to their depths.

"It is I who ought to beg your pardon," he said. "I am afraid I have frightened you. Robinson told me I should find—some one here; but the room seemed empty. I hope you will begin our acquaintance by giving me your forgiveness. I am Tom Randolph, the nephew of the house."

"Thank you," said Lucy, regaining her composure and seriousness, "and I am Lucy Trevor, whom Lady Randolph is so kind as to take care of. It is I who ought to apologize, for I saw you—I saw you directly: but I did not know what to do."

"You must have thought it very alarming, a savage like myself coming in and taking possession. I am much obliged to you for taking it so quietly. My aunt is out, I hear. I wonder, when she has you to bear her company, Miss Trevor, that, now and then, she can't make up her mind to stay at home."

"Oh, but society has claims," said Lucy, repeating the words she had heard so often with matter-of-fact and quite believing simplicity. To her horror and surprise the new-comer replied with a laugh,

"We have all heard that, and let us hope, Miss Trevor, that the votaries of society are rewarded for their devotions. You don't share the *culte?*" he said.

"I! I am not *out;* and, besides, I am in mourning," said Lucy, looking at her crape.

"I beg your pardon; won't you take your seat again, and let me feel my sins forgiven? Did I interrupt your reading? A new novel is much more interesting than an old—or, let us say, a middle-aged savage."

Sir Thomas Randolph saw Lucy look at him when he said this; already did she want to make sure that the savage was not more than middle-aged? He thought so, and he was satisfied.

"It is not that I care for the novel; I had not begun it yet. It is written," said Lucy, trying her new

subject, "by a—gentleman we know; but, perhaps, as you have just come home, you may want dinner, or something, Mr. I—mean Sir Thomas?"

"You have heard of me, I see."

"Oh, yes; Lady Randolph so often speaks of you; but I am not much used to people with titles," Lucy said.

"Do you call mine a title? not much of that. We are commoners, you know: and I hear that whenever there is anything very wicked wanted in a novel, it is always found in a baronet; that is hard upon us, Miss Trevor. I wonder if there is a wicked baronet in the novel you have got there."

"I have not read it yet—it is written," said Lucy, hesitating, "by a gentleman we know. Lady Randolph is going to speak to everybody about it, and we hope it will be very successful."

Lucy could not keep herself from showing a little consciousness. He took it up, and she was very much alarmed lest he should see the dedication. She had never thought it would affect her, yet here, already, she had quite entered into Lady Randolph's feelings. Fortunately he did not see it, though he turned over the volume in his large hands. He was large all over, as different as it was possible to conceive from Bertie, who was slight and dainty, almost like a girl. Lucy was not sure that she had ever seen a man before so near, or spoken to one of this kind. He was so unlike the other people of her acquaintance that she could not help giving curious looks at him under the shade of the lamp. He did not keep still for a moment, but threw his bigness about so that it filled the room,

sometimes getting up and walking up and down, taking up the chairs as if they were toys. He was a creature of a new species. She did not feel towards him as Miranda did to Ferdinand, who was probably an elegant stripling of the Bertie kind, but she was interested in the new being, who was not beautiful. He was so unlike anything she had seen before.

CHAPTER XXIV.

SIR TOM.

THE days that followed were full of this big person. Lucy found his company so pleasant that she lingered, to her own great consternation, talking to him, till Lady Randolph returned; no, not talking very much to him; but yet telling him various things about herself, which she was greatly surprised to recollect afterwards, and hearing him talk, which he did with a frankness and freedom equally unusual to her. When she heard Lady Randolph's brougham draw up at the door, Lucy fairly jumped from her chair in alarm and wonder. What would Lady Randolph say?—would she be angry? A sentiment of honour alone kept her from running away: and her look of innocent panic greatly amused Sir Tom.

"Are you afraid?" he said, with that great but harmonious laugh, which softly shook the house. "Is she so hard upon you? Never mind, she is fond of me, though you would not think it, and, there will be a general amnesty to-night."

"Oh, I am not afraid," Lucy said with a smile. But she said to herself, what will Lady Randolph think? the dedication first, and now to sit up and chatter to a gentleman! But Lady Randolph's voice had never been so soft, nor her countenance so genial. She was so glad to see "Tom," that she saw every thing in the most favourable light. At least, this was

the interpretation Lucy put upon her cloudless graciousness.

"Don't hurry away," she said; "or Tom will think you are glad to escape now your post of entertainer is over;" and she kissed Lucy with a warm, natural tenderness which went to the girl's heart. She went upstairs, indeed altogether in a state of unusual and pleasant commotion. She had never met anybody in her life like Sir Tom. He told her of a hundred places he had been at, of his long journeys, and acquaintance with all sorts of things and people; bringing in the wide atmosphere of a big world into the four walls, which was all the sphere Lucy knew. How pleasant it was! It had stirred her altogether, with curiosity and interest, and amusement and admiration, yet with the amiable derision of a tidy, orderly girl, for the man's faculty of disarranging everything, which made the balance a little more even. He had seen every kind of wonder; but he could not sit down in a chair without ruffling up all its cover, and hooking on its ornaments to his buttons. This made her laugh, and disposed her to take care of Sir Tom, and pilot him to safe chairs, on which there were no antimacassars. She had felt perfectly at her ease with him, almost more than with Mr. Rushton, for instance, whom she had known at home, and the little agitation of his arrival, and the novelty of him generally, drove all her other ideas out of Lucy's head. After she had gone to bed even, she could not but smile in the darkness, to hear his big step coming up-stairs, and his cheerful good-night to his aunt, which sounded up and down the narrow London staircase, so that everybody in the house shared it. "Good night, Sir Tom,"

Lucy said, within herself; and laughed. The house felt more safe, better taken care of, with this newcomer in it. It was enlivening to think that he would be there in the morning, with his cheery voice. "Provided he does not upset the house," Lucy said to herself. She had not been aware that she had so much love of fun in her. As for Lady Randolph, she was glad to see Sir Tom. He was all she had to represent her family, and she was as fond of him as a mother. Perhaps the relationship of aunt made her accept his roving and lawlessness with more composure than a mother would have done; and they were the best friends in the world. When Lucy left the drawing-room, Lady Randolph gave her nephew a keen and anxious look; but it was not till some time after that the new inmate was talked of. Then it was Sir Tom himself who opened the subject.

"That is a jolly little girl you've got."

"Oh, Tom!" his aunt cried, throwing all her breath into that exclamation; "I am so glad to hear you say so."

He laughed. "Do you suppose I am thinking of ulterior steps?" he said; "but I like her. She *is* a jolly little girl."

And Lady Randolph, too, went to bed very happy, thinking Sir Tom's big "good-night," as it went booming up the staircase as pleasant as any music. Her heart swelled, as with the most generous of sentiments; she thought if she could but see the old Hall revived by new money, the rich new life-blood of gold untold, such as would soon be in Lucy's possession, poured into the family veins, she thought she would die happy. And what could Lucy's dearest friend desire better for

her? Mrs. Russell, poor lady, thought the same thing of her son.

And next day, and for some days after, the house was like a new place. He went and came, out to his clubs, to the world outside, and back again, bringing news, public and private, bringing the breath of the general existence, in a manner entirely novel to Lucy. She had heard a great many stories of contemporary life in Lady Randolph's drawing-room before, scraps of politics, which she paid no attention to, and tales of this one and the other, whom she did not know or care for; but whether it was something in the personality of Sir Tom, or that he told these stories better, or that the larger life which he brought into the house, harmonised them, and gave them a human attraction, it would be hard to say; but it is certain that they assumed a totally different character to Lucy. Somehow they did not seem gossip from his lips. Lady Betsinda suggested scandal in every line of her eager old face; but who could call that gossip which fell from the bearded lips of the good-natured adventurer, the man who had friends everywhere, among American Indians and African savages, as well as in the clubs. It is impossible to tell what a difference he made in the house, his very step on the stair brought variety, change, a difference, a relief from monotony, to which no one could remain insensible. The river of life had flowed slowly, partially frostbound by chills to come in Lady Randolph's veins, and not loosed from the spring icicles in Lucy's; but when this torrent of full existence, warm and mature, came in, the stream was at once in flood, neither partial age nor developing youth being beyond its influence. Lucy was so much amused, so

occupied with the change in the house, that the Russells and their concerns faded from her recollection. "Imogen" was put away on a side-table; and she had never required to make use of that subject for conversation: Have you seen the new novel? There was a much more easy one at hand: "Do you know Sir Thomas?" was now the question with which she took the initiative; and Lucy found a power of language she had never dreamt of possessing, in describing his travels and the things he had brought home. Sir Thomas had shot a lion—actually a lion—and had brought back its magnificent skin as a trophy. She got a little pink tinge on her cheeks, which was very becoming, as she described it. This gave her quite a little *succès* among Lady Randolph's visitors, who had hitherto found her very elementary; and already there were jokes about Pygmalion and Galatea, and about the sunshine, which made buds open and birds sing. Lady Randolph, looking on watchfully, would have preferred that the spell had not worked quite so quickly. But as for Lucy she was delighted by her own awakening, and pleased to find herself enjoying everything, even the talk. The house was so much more cheerful now Sir Tom was in it. She put off her usual visit to Jock for a whole week. To be sure there were various reasons for that, for Lucy did not know how to meet Bertie Russell after the dedication, and felt that to speak of it, even to his mother, was difficult. What could she say? It was very "kind," but then it was, as Lady Randolph said, "too broad." Lucy did not like to think of it. She did not know how to meet the young man who had called her an angel of Hope, and addressed her, even in print, as

Lucy; and yet when they met she would be obliged to say something to him. Her embarrassment on this point had been greatly increased by the fact that Sir Tom had found the dedication out, and had "made fun" of it. He was mischievous, though Lucy did not like to think he was unkind. Sometimes he would refer to the Angel of Hope in a way which covered her with confusion, alarming her with a possibility of betrayal; but it was only to teaze her, and she did not on the whole dislike Sir Tom's teazing. On one of these occasions however she was so much frightened that she remonstrated. "Please," she said, "do not tell any one it is me. Perhaps after all it is not me; Lucy is not an uncommon name. And oh, Sir Thomas, *if* you please, do not talk of it when any one is here."

"I am afraid it must be you," Sir Thomas said, "there could not be two with the same characteristics; but you may trust me, Miss Lucy, I will not tell, no, not for anything that might be offered me. Wild horses——"

"You are laughing at me," she said.

"Would you have me cry? But I should like to punch the young fellow's head. He had no right to do it. It was like a cad to do it; even in gratitude, he ought not to have exposed you to anything that might be disagreeable; besides, Miss Lucy, it is taking a base advantage of other fellows who cannot write books."

Lucy was not quite sure what he meant by this, but she replied very gravely,

"I am afraid it is the only thing he can do. Do

not laugh, please, it is very serious. I am very anxious to know how it turns out."

"Then you take a great deal of interest in him?"

"I take a great deal of interest in *that*. They all depend upon it; and also for other things. Do you think he will make much money by it, Sir Thomas?"

"I have not an idea; the only thing I know about literature is that I was offered something if I would write my travels. I have been in a good many out of the way places, you know, and then I am pretty well known; but, unfortunately, I could not, so that money got lost, more's the pity!"

"It was a great pity," said Lucy, with feeling. "How strange it seems, you who cannot write are offered money for it, and he who can write is kept so uncertain. It seems always to be like that. There is myself, with a great deal too much money, and so many people with none at all."

Sir Thomas laughed; the frankness of the heiress amused him beyond measure.

"Have you a great deal too much money?" he said.

"Yes, did you not know? But it will not be so much," Lucy said, with an involuntary burst of confidence, "after a while."

This puzzled him quite as much as anything he could say puzzled her. He did not know what to make of it, for there was no jest, but perfect and candid gravity in Lucy's tone. He thought it best, however, to take it as a mere girlish levity and threat of extravagance to come.

"Do you mean to make it go, then?" he said. "Don't! Take my advice: I have a good right to give

it, for I have paid for my experience. Don't throw your money away as I have done."

"Have you thrown it away? I am very sorry. I—wonder——?" Lucy looked at him doubtfully, almost wistfully. Was she going to offer him some of hers? he asked himself. He was at once amused and touched, and full of expectation as to what she would say next; but Lucy changed her tone. "I will not throw it away," she said quietly. "Papa directed me, before he died, what to do with it. It is a great responsibility;" and here she paused and looked at him once more. Was she going to confide some secret to him? Sir Thomas was very much puzzled, indeed, more than he remembered ever to have been puzzled by any girl. He was a man over thirty, a man of large experience, but this young creature was a novelty to him.

"I should like to see how you will spend your fortune," he said. "I shall watch what you do with it. Mine went before I took time to consider the responsibility. Marriage is not the only thing that one does in haste and repents at leisure. I am very sorry now, I can tell you, that I was such a fool when I was young."

"I—wonder——?" Lucy said again, softly to herself. She could not help longing to tell somebody her secret, somebody that would feel a little sympathy for her—why not this big, kind, genial stranger, who was quite unlike all the rest of her people? who would surely understand, she thought. But Sir Thomas did not in the least understand. He thought she would have liked to give him some of her money, and, indeed, for his own part, he would not have had the slightest objection to accept the whole of it, as his aunt had

planned and hoped; but a portion would be impossible. He laughed, looking at her, in his turn, with kindness in his amusement.

"Are you meditating some benevolence?" he said. "But, Miss Lucy, benevolence is a very doubtful virtue. You must reflect well, and take the advice of your business people. You must not be too ready to give away. You see, though I have not known you long, I am disposed to take upon me the tone of a Mentor already, an uncle experienced and elderly, or something of that sort."

"Indeed, that is just what I should like," Lucy said, simply.

This was a dreadful dash of cold water in his face. It is one thing to call yourself experienced and elderly, and quite another to be taken at your word. He laughed again, but this time at himself, and accepted the position with a curious sense of its inappropriateness which was all the more vivid because she did not seem to see it to be inappropriate at all.

"Well," he said, "that's a bargain. When you want to do anything angelically silly, and throw away your money, you are to come and consult me."

"Do you really mean it?" said Lucy, with most serious eyes.

"I really mean it, and there is my hand upon it," he said. She put her hand into his with gentle confidence, and he held it for a moment, looking at the slender fingers. Lucy, as has been said, had, though she had no right to it, a pretty hand. "What a little bit of a thing," he said, "to have so much to give away."

"Yes," Lucy said, with a long breath that was

scarcely a sigh, and without the vestige of a blush or embarrassment, "it is a great responsibility." She was as sincere and serious as if he had been an old woman, Sir Thomas felt, and he laughed and let the little hand drop. His fatherly flirtation, a mode which he had known to be very efficacious, had no more effect than if he had been a hundred. This failure tickled his sense of humour, far more than success would have pleased him otherwise.

"That girl is a little original," he said, when he talked her over with Lady Randolph; but, meantime, it was very certain that they were the best of friends.

They were seated at breakfast on Saturday morning, rather more than a week after his arrival. Lucy had been making up her mind that she could make no further excuse to herself, but must go to Hampstead that day, and was trying, as she drank her coffee, to compose little speeches fit for the occasion. Sir Thomas was half-hidden behind the newspaper, and Lady Randolph cast a glance now and then, as she finished her breakfast, at the pages of a weekly review, supposed to be the most *spirituel* of its kind, the first in fashion and in force.

"Oh!" she cried suddenly. "Lucy! here is something interesting, here is a notice of 'Imogen.' You must take it out to the Russells: for once Cecilia has been as good as her word."—Lucy was in the midst of a carefully turned sentence by which she meant to assure Mrs. Russell that she felt Bertie's "kindness;" she looked up with lively interest;—then, "Good heavens!" Lady Randolph cried.

"What is the matter, aunt?" said Sir Tom; he put out his big hand and took it from before her, with the

license of his privileged position. "We others are most anxious to hear, and you keep it to yourself. Shall I read it aloud, Miss Lucy?"

"No! no!" Lady Randolph cried, putting out her hand. She was pale with fright and trouble, but Sir Tom did not pay any attention; he did not notice her looks, and what was there in Bertie Russell to make anything that could be said about his book alarming to these ladies? He took it up lightly.

"I must see this Russell," he said, "that you are so much interested in. What right has the fellow to make you anxious?" he was looking at Lucy, who was, indeed, curious and interested, but no more. "Now, if you are not good," he said, looking at her, "I shall keep you in suspense."

But Lucy did not accept the challenge. She smiled in reply, with her usual tranquillity.

"It is Mrs. Russell who will be in suspense," she said: and with a little friendly nod at her he began to read. It was the kind of review for which this organ of the highest literature was famous. This was what Sir Thomas read:

"We have so often had occasion to point out to the female manufacturer of novels the disadvantages which attend her habitual unacquaintance with the simplest rules of her art, that it is a sort of relief to find upon the title-page of the most recent example of this class of productions a name which is not feminine. The occurrence is rare. In this branch of industry, at least, men have shown a chivalrous readiness to leave the laurels growing low, and therefore within the reach of the weaker vessel, to the gathering of woman. She

has here had the chance, so often demanded, of proving her powers, and she has not been reluctant to avail herself of it. Almost as appropriately feminine as Berlin wool, or the more fashionable crewels, the novel of domestic life has acquired a stamp of virtuous tedium, or unvirtuous excitement, which are equally feminine, and we sigh in vain for a larger rendering even of the levities of existence, a treatment more broad, a touch more virile."

"There's for you, Miss Lucy," said Sir Tom, pausing; "how do you like that, my excellent aunt? He puts your sex in their right place. There's a man now who feels his natural superiority, who contemplates you all *de haut en bas*——"

"Oh, don't read any more, Tom; it is not worth your while to read any more."

"Ah! you are hit," he said. "Hurrah! the iron has entered into your soul."

"Half a dozen pages of 'Imogen' will, however, (he continued reading,) be enough to make any reader pause who is moved by this natural sentiment. What! he will ask himself, was there no little war in hand demanding recruits? no expedition to discover the undiscoverable? even no stones to break on the roadside, which could have given Mr. Albert Russell a bit of manly work to do—that he must take up with this industry reserved for the incompetent?"

Here Lucy uttered a long drawn "oh!" of alarm. It had not occurred to her ignorance that there could be any malice in it.

"We must give him credit, however, for a courage and liberality beyond that of his feminine contempora-

ries in the freedom with which he has mixed up what is apparently a personal romance of his own with this production of his genius. Whether the young lady, who is poetically addressed as the Angel of Hope, will relish the homage so publicly paid to her is a different matter. We can but hope that, since the art he has adopted is little likely, we fear, to reward his exertions, the other patronesses to whom he devotes himself may be more kind, and that the owner of the pretty Christian name, which is presented without the conventionality of a Miss or Mistress——"

"Hallo!" said Sir Tom. He had been reading on, without any particular attention to what he read, until the recollection of what it meant suddenly flashed upon him. He grew very red, put down the paper, and looked at his companions. "By Jove!" he cried.

"I told you not to read it," cried Lady Randolph. "Never mind, Lucy, my love, nobody will know it is you. Oh, I could kill the presumptuous, impertinent——! And that woman is worse!" she cried with vehemence. "She who knew all about it; I will never forgive her. She shall never enter this house."

"Woman?" said Sir Thomas, "what woman? By Jove!" here he got up and buttoned his coat, "whoever the fellow is he shall have my opinion of him before he is much older."

"Sit down, Tom, sit down. If it was a fellow whom you could knock down there would be no great harm done; no fellow ever wrote *that*," cried Lady Randolph, with that fine contempt of masculine efforts which is peculiar to women. "Oh, I know the hand! I know every stroke! But never mind, never mind, my dear child, nobody will connect you with it; unless the

'Age' gets hold of it, and gives us all a paragraph; there is nothing more likely," she cried, with tears of anger and annoyance. As for Sir Thomas, he paced about the room in great perturbation, saying, "By Jove!" under his breath.

"A woman! then there is nothing to be done," he said.

"Oh, no; you can't knock her down, more's the pity! or call her out. But, Tom, if you will think, it is just as well, it is far better; we can't have any talk got up about that innocent child."

"Lady Randolph, is it me you are thinking of? What harm can it do me?" said Lucy, who had grown pale, but was puzzled and frightened, and did not quite understand why all this excitement should be.

"What harm, indeed!" cried Lady Randolph, "so long as you don't mind it, my darling! She is the only one that has sense among us, Tom."

"That is all very well," Sir Tom said. "She is too young to understand; it is meant for an insult. There's the harm of women getting their fingers into every pie. You can't kick them. By Jove! isn't there any other way that one can serve her out?"

"Sir Thomas," said Lucy, "you laughed at me about it yourself."

"So I did; I am ready to laugh at you, my dear little girl, any moment—but I should like to see another man do it," he cried.

Lady Randolph looked at him in dismay. What could he mean? to speak with such kindly familiarity, as if she were his cousin, at the least. (Though Lady Randolph professed to be a connection, yet this link was not even known to Sir Tom.) Would not the

heiress be alarmed? would not she suspect and divine? She turned her eyes furtively towards Lucy, more troubled than before.

But Lucy took it all very calmly. She showed no consciousness of too much or too little in her new friend's address. She smiled at him with grateful confidence, without even a blush. What was there to blush for? Then her face clouded over a little.

"Will it hurt the book? will he get no money for it?" she said.

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OF VOLUME II.

THE GREATEST HEIRESS IN ENGLAND.

CHAPTER I.

A BAD RECEPTION.

Lucy rode to Hampstead that morning, Sir Thomas, to her great surprise, volunteering to go with her. He had some one in those regions whom he too wished to see, he said. Lucy was not sure whether she was most pleased or disconcerted by this companionship; but the ride was all the more agreeable. He was, as usual, very kind, friendly, and brotherly—or rather, as she thought, taking his own statement frankly, like an uncle, an elder, experienced, but altogether delightful friend, to whom she could say a great many things, which it would have been impossible to say to one near her own age and condition.

Oddly enough Lucy was mysterious to Sir Thomas, the only person with whom she felt inclined to be confidential. She hovered about the edge of her secret, asking herself whether she should confide in him, half betraying herself, then drawing back, more from shyness than want of faith in him. She had known

him so short a time; perhaps he would think it bold and presuming of her, to thrust her confidences upon him. This hesitation on her part gave her an attraction which was not at all natural to her. The touch of the little mystery added what was wanting to the simplicity, and good sense, and straightforward reasonableness of Lucy's character. What was it that lay thus below the surface? Sir Thomas asked himself. What did she want to confide to him? there was certainly something; was it some entanglement or other, some girlish engagement perhaps with this fellow, who had been base enough to expose her to the remarks of the world. It seemed to Sir Tom that this was the most natural secret, the most probable embarrassment that Lucy could have; and with great vehemence of disdain and wrath, he thought of the "cad" who had probably inveigled the girl into some sort of promise, and then proceeded to brag of it before all the world. Thus Sir Thomas Randolph, out of his much experience, entirely misconstrued these two young persons who had no experience at all. Bertie Russell was not a young man of very elevated character, but he was not a "cad;" neither, very far from it, was Lucy a fool; but then Sir Tom—though he was full of honest instincts and good feeling, and would not himself (though he thought it no harm to lay siege to an heiress, when the chance fell in his way) have done anything which could be stigmatized as the act of a cad—still judged as the world judges, which is after all a superficial way of estimating human action: and he was as entirely wrong, and blundered as completely in the maze of his own inventions, as the greatest simpleton could have done; which is one of the penal-

ties of worldly wisdom, though one which the wise are most slow to learn. Notwithstanding, he made her ride very pleasant to Lucy. He talked up all sorts of subjects, not allowing her mind to dwell upon the annoyance of the morning. And though this annoyance was not at all of the kind he imagined, it was still good for her not to be left to invent little speeches to be made to Mrs. Russell, or to imagine dialogues that might never take place. Lucy's mind had been in a good deal of excitement when they set out. She had resolved to make the plunge, to announce her intentions to Mrs. Russell, and though there was nothing but good in these intentions, still it requires almost as much courage to inform a person who has no natural claim upon you that you mean to provide for her as it does to interfere in any other way in the concerns of a stranger; or at least this was how Lucy felt. Her heart beat: had she been a poor governess going to look for a situation she could not have been more nervous about the result of the interview. But the summer morning was exhilarating, and Sir Thomas talked to her all the way. He told her of a great many other rides taken in very different circumstances, he took her for little excursions, so to speak, into his own life; he made her laugh, he led her out of herself. When she reached Mrs. Russell's door, she had almost forgot how momentous was the act she was about to do. "I will come back for you," Sir Tom cried, waving his hand. He did not come up the steep bit of street. How kind he was, not oppressing her with too much even of his own company! Lucy had not known how she was to get rid of him when she reached the house.

The house looked more neglected than ever when Lucy went in. She could not but notice that, as soon as she appeared, the blind of the dining-room, which faced the street, was hurriedly drawn down. She could, it was true, command it as she sat there on her horse; but she was wounded by the suggestion that she might intend to spy upon them, to look at something which she was not wanted to see. In the hall, outside the door of this closed room, a breakfast tray was standing, though it was noon. The grimy little maid was more grimy than ever. She showed Lucy into the faded drawing-room, where the blinds were drawn down for the sun, which however streamed in at all the crevices, showing the dust and the faded colours. There were flowers on the table in a trumpery glass vase, all limp and dying. A shabby miserable room, of which no care was taken, and which looked like the abode of people who had lost heart, and even ceased to care for appearances. Lucy's heart sank as she looked round. She who was so tidy, with so much bourgeois orderliness in her nature, felt all this much more than perhaps an observer with higher faculties would have done. It looked as if it had not been "touched" this morning, and it was with a pang of pity that Lucy regarded the evident disorganization of a house in which the chief room, the woman's place, "had not been touched" at noon of a summer day. It almost brought the tears to her eyes. And she had a long time to wait to note all the dust, the bits of trimming torn off the curtains, the unmended holes in the carpet. She even looked about furtively for a needle and thread: but there were no implements of work to be seen, nothing but the fading flowers all soiled with

decay, a fine shabby book on the undusted table, the common showy ornaments all astray on the mantelpiece. About a quarter of an hour passed thus before Mrs. Russell came in, with eyes redder than ever. Mrs. Russell could not be untidy though her room was. She had the decorum of her class whatever happened; but her black gown was rusty, and the long streamers of her widow's cap had been worn longer than was compatible with freshness. She held herself very stiffly as she came in, and gave Lucy the tips of her fingers. The poorer she was the more stately she became. There was in her attitude, in her expression, a reproach against the world. That she should be thus poor, thus unfortunate, was somebody's fault.

"Your little brother is out, Miss Trevor, with the others. He thought you had quite given him up, and were coming no more."

"Oh, Jock could not think that."

"Perhaps not Jock; but I certainly did, who have, I hope, some experience of the world;" said the poor lady, in her bitterness, "it is quite natural; though I should have thought Lady Randolph had sufficient knowledge of what is considered proper, to respect your recent mourning; but all these old formalities are made light of nowadays. When one sees girls dancing in crape! I wonder they don't feel as if they were dancing over their relations' graves."

"Dear Mrs. Russell," said Lucy; "I have not been dancing. I did not come because—because— It was Lady Randolph that was vexed. I am much obliged, *very* much obliged to Mr. Bertie for being so kind; but Lady Randolph thought—"

"Yes, I never doubted it," cried Bertie's moth

with an outburst. "I never doubted it! I told him it was imprudent at the time, and would expose him to unjust suspicions; as if *he* was one to scheme for anybody's money! much more likely her own nephew, her dear Sir Thomas, whom she is always talking of! But Bertie would do it; he said where he owed gratitude he never should be afraid to pay it. And to think that the very person he wished to honour should turn against him; and now he is ruined altogether—ruined in all his prospects!" the poor mother cried amid a tempest of sobs.

"Ruined!" cried Lucy, aghast.

"He is lying there, in the next room, my poor boy. I thought he would have died this morning—oh, it is cruel, cruel! He is quite crushed by it. I tell him it is all a wicked plot, and that surely, surely, there will be some honest man who will do him justice! But, though I say it, I don't put any faith in it, for where is there an honest critic?" cried Mrs. Russell; "from all I hear there is not such a thing to be found. They praise the people they know—people who court them and fawn on them; but it isn't in the Russell blood to do that. And the worst of all," she said, with a fresh flood of tears, "the worst of all—the thing that has just been the last blow—is that you have not stood by him, Lucy, you that kept on encouraging him, and have brought it all upon him."

"*I* brought it all upon him!" Lucy's consternation was almost beyond words.

"Yes, Miss Trevor," said the poor lady, hysterically. "He would never have done it had not you encouraged him—never! and now this is what is brought against

him. Oh, they cannot say a word against his talent," she said; "not a word! They cannot say the book is not beautiful; what they say is all about *that*, which was put in to please *you*—and you have not the heart to stand up for him!" the mother cried. She was so much excited, and poured forth such tears and sobs, that Lucy found herself without a word to say. The trouble, no doubt, was real enough, but it was mixed with so much excitement and feverish exaggeration that the girl's sympathetic heart was chilled; and yet she had so much to say. "But he must not put up with it," cried Mrs. Russell; "he shall not put up with it if I can help it. He must write and tell them. And there is not one word of real criticism—not one word! Bertie himself says so; nothing but joking and jeering about the dedication. But I know whose hand that is—it is Lady Randolph who has done it. I knew she would interfere as soon as she thought— 'Bertie,' I said, 'don't — don't for heaven's sake! You will bring a hornet's nest about your ears.' But he always said 'Mother! I must.' And now to think that the girl herself, that has brought him into all this trouble, should not have the heart to stand up for him! Oh, it just shows what I've always said, the wickedness and hollowness of the world!"

Then there was a pause, through which was heard only the sound of Mrs. Russell's sobbing. Lucy sat undecided, not knowing what to do. She was indignant, but more surprised than indignant at the accusation; and she was entirely unaccustomed to blame, and did not know how to defend herself. She sat with her heart beating, and listened, now and then trying to remonstrate, to make an appeal, but in

vain. At last, the moment came when her accuser had poured forth all she had to say. But this silence was almost as painful as the unexpected violence that preceded it. To be accused wrongfully, if terrible, has still some counterbalancing effect in the roused *amour-propre* of the innocent victim; but to watch the voice of the accuser quenched by emotion, to hear the sobs dying off, then bursting out again, the red eyes wiped, then filling—all in a silence which her own lips were too much parched with agitation to permit her to break, was almost more hard upon Lucy. She had become very pale, and she did not know what to say. More entirely guiltless than she felt herself, no one could have been. She was so innocent that she had no defence to make; and the attack took from her all the thoughts of which her mind had been full. All the more the silence weighed upon her. It was terrible to sit there with her eyes on the floor, and say nothing. At last she managed to falter forth: "May I see Jock, Mrs. Russell, before I go?"

"I suppose you will want to remove him," Mrs. Russell said. "Oh! I quite understand that. I expected nothing else. The brother of a rich heiress is out of place with a poor ruined family. Everything is forsaking us. Let him go too—let him go too!"

"Indeed!" said Lucy, recovering her composure a little. "I was not thinking of that. I meant only ——"

"Never mind what you meant, Miss Trevor; it is better he should go. Things have gone too far now," said the disturbed woman. "All the rest are going —we shall have to go ourselves. Oh! I thought it

would not matter so long as my Bertie—God forgive them! God forgive them!" she said, with trembling lips. "I thought it would all come right, and everything succeed, when my boy—— But we are ruined, ruined! I don't know where we are to turn, or what we are to do."

"Mrs. Russell, will you let me say something to you?" Lucy said. This cry of distress had restored her to herself. "I meant to have said it before. It is not because of what has happened. It was all settled in my mind before. I was only waiting till I could arrange with my guardian. Mrs. Russell, papa left some money to be given away—"

Here she made a little pause for breath. Her companion made no remark, but sat, lying back in her chair, with her handkerchief to her eyes.

"It was a good deal of money," said Lucy. "He told me I was not to throw it away, but to give enough to be of real use. I thought—that you would like to have some of it, Mrs. Russell. That—it might do you a little good."

Mrs. Russell let her handkerchief drop, and stared at Lucy with her poor red eyes.

"If you would let me give you part of it—I cannot tell how much would be enough: but if you would tell me — and we could consider everything. It is lying there for the use of—people who are in want of it. I hope you will take some of it. I should be very *thankful* to you," said Lucy, with a little nervous emphasis. "It is there only to be given away."

Lucy had felt that it would be a difficult communication to make, but she had no fear of any refusal. She did not venture to look up, but kept her

eyes fixed on the carpet, though she was very conscious, notwithstanding, of every movement her companion made. The girl was shy of the favour she was conferring, and frightened in anticipation of the thanks she would probably receive; if only it could be settled and paid without any thanks! When her own voice stopped she became still more frightened. The silence was unbearable, and Lucy gave an alarmed glance towards the sofa. Mrs. Russell was gasping for breath, inflating her lungs, apparently in vain, and struggling for utterance. This struggle ended in a hoarse and moaning cry.

"Oh, what have I done, what have I done, that it should come to this?"

"Mrs. Russell! you are ill. Are you ill?" Lucy cried, alarmed.

"Oh, what have I done, what have I done, that it should come to this?" she moaned. "Am I a beggar that it should come to this? to offer me money in my own house? money, as if I were a beggar in the street? Oh, don't say anything more, Miss Trevor, don't say anything more!" Here she got up, clasping her hands wildly, and walked about the room like a creature distracted, as, indeed, between pride and shame, and wretchedness and folly, the poor woman almost was. "Oh, why didn't I die! why didn't I die when *he* died?" she cried. "It is more than I can bear. I, that was a Stonehouse, and married a Russell, to be treated like a beggar in the street. Oh, my God!" cried the excited creature, "have I not enough to bear without being insulted? I can starve, or I can die, but to be insulted—it is more than I can bear."

Lucy was confounded. She stumbled to her feet, also, in overwhelming distress. She had meant no harm, heaven knows! She had not meant to wound the most delicate feeling. It was a view of the matter which had never occurred to her.

"I must have said something wrong—without meaning it," she faltered. "I don't know how to speak, but I did not mean to make you angry; oh, forgive me! please forgive me! I mean nothing but——"

"This is what it is to be poor," Mrs. Russell said. "Oh, I ought to thank you for it, that among other things—I never would have known all the bitterness of being poor but for this: and yet I never held out my hand to ask anything," she cried, beginning to weep. "I never thrust my poverty on anybody. I did all I could to keep up—a good appearance; and to hope——" here the sobs burst forth again beyond restraint, "for better days."

"What is the matter?" said Bertie, pushing open the door. He was carelessly dressed in an old coat, his hair in disorder, his feet in slippers, he who had always decorated himself so carefully for Lucy's eyes. He did not take the trouble to open the door with his hand, but pushed it rudely with his person, and gave Lucy a sullen nod and good morning. "What are you making such a row about, mother?" he said.

"Oh, Bertie, Miss Trevor has come—to offer me charity!" she cried, "charity! She sees we are poor, and, because she is rich, she thinks she can treat me, me! like a beggar in the street, and offer me money. Oh, Bertie! Bertie! my boy!" the poor woman threw her arm round him, and began to sob on his shoulder,

"what has your poor mother done that she should be humbled like this?"

"Charity!" he said; then looked at Lucy with an insolent laugh that brought the colour to the girl's face; "it is, perhaps, conscience money," he cried. Then putting his mother away from him: "Go and lie down, mamma, you have had excitement enough this morning. We are not beggars, whatever Miss Trevor may think." Bertie's eyes were red too, he was still at the age when tears, though the man is ashamed of them, are not far from the eyes when trouble comes. "Naturally," he said, "we all stand upon what we have got, and money is what you have got, Miss Trevor. Oh, it is a very good thing, it saves you from many annoyances. We have not very much of it, but we can do without charity." His lip quivered, his heart was sore, and his pride cut to pieces. "Money is not everything, though, perhaps, *you* may be excused for thinking so," he said. He wanted to retaliate on some one; the smarting of his eyelids, the quiver which he could not keep from his lips, the wounds of his pride still bleeding and fresh, all filled him with a kind of blind fury and desire to make some one else suffer. He would have liked to tear his angel of hope to pieces in the misery of his disappointment. Was it not her fault?

As for Lucy, she stood like a culprit before the mother and the son, looking at them with a pathetic protest in her eyes, like that with which an innocent dumb creature appeals against fate. She was as much surprised by all this storm of denunciation as a lamb is by the blow that ends its life. When they were silent, and it was time for her to speak, she opened her lips and drew a long troubled breath, but she could say

nothing for herself. What was there to say? She was too much astonished even for indignation.

"I—will go, if you please, and wait for Jock in the street," was all she found herself able to say.

And just then the voices of the children, to her great relief, were audible outside. Lucy hurried away, feeling for the moment more miserable than she had ever been in her life before. There were but three little boys now, and Mary, who had come in with them, was standing a little in advance, listening, with an anxious face, to the sound of the voices in the drawing-room. Mary was hostile too; she looked at Lucy with defiant eyes.

"Oh, is it really you, at last, Miss Trevor?" she said.

Poor Lucy felt her heart swell with the sting of so much unkindness. She cried when Jock rushed forward and threw himself upon her.

"You are the same, at least," she said with a sob, as she kissed him. "May he come out with me? for I cannot stay here any longer."

The other girl, who did not know the meaning of all this, was shaken out of her sullenness by the threatening of another calamity. Mary had nothing to do with the quarrel. She grew, if possible, a little more pale.

"Do you mean that he is to go—for good?" she said, looking wistfully at the diminished band, only three, and there had been ten! It was all she could do to keep from crying too. "I have always tried to do the best I could for him," she said.

CHAPTER II.

A RECEPTION OF A DIFFERENT KIND.

LUCY rode home without waiting for Sir Thomas, with a heavy heart. She said very little when she got back. To Lady Randolph's questions she had scarcely anything to reply. In Lady Randolph's eyes the chief person to be considered was Lucy, whose name had been so cruelly brought before the public. When it did occur to her that the poor young author might be cast down by the cruel comments upon his first production, it is to be feared that the verdict "served him right," was the one that occurred first to her mind. Only in the course of the afternoon, when Lucy's increased gravity had made a distinct impression upon her, did she express any feeling on this point. "Of course I am sorry for his mother," she said; "a silly woman, no energy, no resource in her; but it will wound her of course. How are they getting on with their school? That little girl, Mary, that was the only one that seemed to me to be good for anything. Are they getting on any better with their school?"

Lucy shook her head. She could not muster courage to speak, the tears were in her eyes.

"Ah!" said Lady Randolph, Lucy's emotion had a very disturbing effect upon her; but it moved her not to compassion for Mrs. Russell, but to suspicion against Bertie. "I never thought it would come to much," she said. "It seems so easy to start anything like that. They had their furniture, and what more did they want. Indian children! one would think it rained Indian children; every poor lady with no money

thinks she can manage to make a living out of them —without calculating that everybody in India, or almost everybody, has poor relations of their own."

But she was kind notwithstanding her severity. There are few people who are not more or less kind to absolute suffering. Though she thought Mrs. Russell silly, and considered that her son had been served rightly (if cruelly), and was impatient of the foolish hopes on which their little establishment had been founded, still she could not be satisfied to leave the poor lady whom she had known in her better days, to want. "I will speak to Tom," she said, "if Bertie could but get some situation, far better than writing nonsensical books, something in the Customs, or perhaps the post-office—I believe there are a great many young men of good families in places like that—where he could get a settled income, and be able to help his mother."

Lucy made no reply to this suggestion. She brightened a little in the evening, when Sir Tom came in, bringing all his news with him; but she was not herself. When she was safe in her room at night, she cried plentifully, like a child as she was, over her failure. Perhaps her heart had never been so sore. Sorrow, such as she had felt for her father, is a different thing—there had been no cross or complication in that; but in this all her life seemed to be compromised. This dearest legacy that had been left her, the power of making others happy, was it to be a failure in her hands? She had never contemplated such a probability. In all the books she had read (and these are a girl's only medium of knowledge) there had been no such incident. There had been indeed records of profuse

gratitude, followed by unkindness and indifference; but these had never alarmed Lucy. Gratitude had been the only thing she feared, and that the recipients of the bounty should forget it, was her chief hope. But this unexpected rebuff threw Lucy down to the earth from those heights of happy and simple benificence. Was it her fault, she asked herself? had she offered it unkindly, shown any ungenerous feeling? She examined every word she had said—at least as far as she could recollect them; but she had been so much agitated, so overwhelmed by the excitement and passion of the others, that she could not recollect much that she had said. All night long in her dreams she was pleading with people who would not take her gifts, and blaming herself for not knowing how to offer them. And when she woke in the morning, was it my fault? was the first question that occurred to her. It seemed to assail the very foundations of her life. Was not this her first duty, and if she could not discharge it what was to become of her? What would be the value of all the rest?

She was sitting in the sitting-room in the morning, somewhat disconsolate, pondering these questions. A bright, still morning of midsummer, all the windows open, and shaded by the pretty striped blinds outside, which kept out the obtrusive sunshine, yet showed it brilliant over all the world below; the windows were full of flowers, those city plants always at the fullest perfection, which know no vicissitudes of growth or decay, but fill the luxurious rooms with one continuous bloom, by grace, not of nature, but the gardener. It was the hour when Lucy was supposed to "read." She had not herself any great eagerness for education; but

no woman who respects herself can live in the same house with a young girl nowadays, without taking care to provide that she shall "read." Lucy had need enough, it must be allowed, to improve her mind; but that mind, so far as the purely intellectual qualities were concerned, did not count for very much in her being. To be more or less well-informed does not affect very much, one way or other, the character, though we fear to utter any dogmatism on such a subject. She was reading history, poor child; she had a number of books open before her, a large Atlas, and was toiling conscientiously through a number of battles. Into the very midst of these battles, her thoughts of the earlier morning, which were so much more interesting to her, would intrude, and indeed she had paused after the battle of Lepanto, and was asking herself, not who was Don John of Austria, or what other great personages had figured there, which was what she ought to have done—but whether it could possibly be her fault, and in what other form she could have put it to succeed better—when suddenly, without any warning, a knock came to her door. She sat very bolt upright at once, and thought of Don John, before she said "Come in." Perhaps it was the lady who was so kind as to read with her—perhaps it was Lady Randolph. She said "Come in," and with no displeasure at all, but much consolation, closed her book. She was not sorry to part company with Don John.

To her great surprise, when the door opened, it was neither Lady Randolph nor the lady who directed her reading, but Mrs. Russell, with the heavy crape veil hanging over her bonnet, her eyes still very red,

and her countenance very pale. Lucy rose hastily from her chair, repeating her "Come in," with the profoundest astonishment, but eagerness. Could it be Jock who was ill? could it be—Mrs. Russell smiled a somewhat ghastly smile, and looked with an anxious face at the surprised girl. She took the chair Lucy gave her, threw back her veil, and the little mantle from her shoulders, which was crape too, and looked suffocating. Then she prepared for the interview by taking out her handkerchief. Tears were inevitable, however it might turn out.

"You will be surprised to see me," Mrs. Russell said.

Lucy assented breathless. "Is there anything the matter with Jock?" she said.

"It is natural you should think of your own first," said the visitor with a little forced smile. "Oh, very natural. We always think of our own first. No, Miss Trevor, there is nothing the matter with Jock. What should be the matter with him? He is very well cared for. My poor Mary gives herself up to the care of him. She lies awake with him and his stories. Mary is a—— She is the best daughter that ever was——" the mother said with fervour. Now Mary was generally in the background among the Russells, and Lucy was perplexed more and more.

"It is by Mary's advice I have come," Mrs. Russell said, putting her handkerchief to her eyes. "It has been very difficult for me, very difficult to make up my mind to come, Miss Trevor. Mary says she is sure you meant—kindly—yesterday. I don't know how to refer to yesterday. Everything that passed is written here," she said, putting her hand upon her

breast, "as if it were in fire—as if it were in fire! Oh, Miss Trevor! you don't know what it is when a woman has kept up a good position all her life, and always been able to hold her head high—you don't know what it is when she has to give in, and allow herself to be spoken to as one of the poor!"

Here she began to cry, and Lucy cried too. "I did not mean it," she said fervently, "indeed, indeed, I did not mean it. If I said anything wrong, forgive me. It was because I did not know how to speak."

"Well, dear," said Mrs. Russell, drying her eyes, "perhaps it was so. You are very young, and you have not had much experience; and, as Bertie says, you have so much money, that it is no wonder if you think a great deal of it. But you shouldn't, Miss Trevor—you shouldn't. Money is of great use; but it is not everything."

Here the poor lady paused and glanced round the room, in every point so dainty, all the details so perfect, everything fresh, well chosen, adapted to the corner it filled; and the flowers so abundant, and so sweet. "Oh!" she said, "it wants no arguing. Money tells for so much in this life. Look at my Mary. She is younger than you are, she is clever and good, yet look at her, and look at you. I think it will break my heart!"

Lucy made no reply. After all, it was not her fault that she had a great deal of money—that she was a great heiress. There was no reason why that fact should break Mrs. Russell's heart. "If I had not had it," she faltered apologetically, "some one else would have had it. It would not have made any difference if it had been another girl, or me."

"Oh yes! it would have made a difference. When you don't know the person, it never feels quite so hard. But I don't blame you—I don't blame you. I suppose everyone would be rich if they could; or, at least, most people," said Mrs. Russell with a tone which seemed to imply that she herself would be the exception, and superior to the charms of wealth.

At this Lucy was silent, perhaps not feeling that she had ever wished to be poor; and yet who, she thought within herself, knew the burden of wealth as she did? it had brought her more trouble than pleasure as yet. She felt troubled and cast down, even though her girlish submission began to be modified by the faintest shy gleam of consciousness that there was something ludicrous in the situation, in her visitor's disapproval, and her own humble half-acknowledgment of the guilt of being rich.

"Miss Trevor," Mrs. Russell said, with trembling lips. "Though I wish you had not found it out, or that, if you did, you had not taken any notice of it, which is what one expects from one's friends, I cannot deny that you are right. We have lost almost everything," she said, steadying her voice in dreary sincerity. "We have been fighting on from hand to mouth—sometimes not knowing where next week's bills were to come from. Oh! more than that—not able to pay the week's bills; getting into debt, and nothing, nothing coming in. I kept up, always hoping that Bertie—Bertie with his talents—— Oh! you don't know—nobody knows how clever he is! As soon as he got an opening—— But now it seems all ended," she added, her voice failing. "These people, oh God, forgive them! they don't know, perhaps, how wicked

it is—these envious cruel people have half killed my boy; and I have not a penny, nothing, Miss Trevor, nothing; and the rent due, and the pupils all dropping away."

Lucy rose and came to where the poor woman sat struggling with her emotion. It was not a case for words. She went and stood by her, crying softly, while Mrs. Russell leant her crape-laden head upon the girl's breast and sobbed. All her defences were broken down. She grasped Lucy's arm and clung to it as if it had been an anchor of salvation. "And I came——" she gasped, "to say, if you would really be so kind—oh, how can I ask it!—as to *lend* us the money you spoke of—only to *lend* it, Miss Trevor, till something better turns up—till Bertie gets something to do. He is willing to do anything now: or till Mary finds a situation. It can't be but that we shall be able to pay you, somehow—— And there is the furniture for security. Oh! I don't know how to ask it. I never borrowed money before, nor wished for anything that was not my own. But, oh, Lucy! if you really, really have it to do what you like with— The best people are obliged to borrow sometimes," Mrs. Russell added looking up wistfully with an attempt at a smile, "and there is nothing to be ashamed of in being poor."

But this was an emergency for which Lucy's straightforward nature was not prepared. She had the power to give she knew; but to lend she did not think she had any power. What was she to do? She had not imagination enough to conceive the possibility that borrowing does not always mean repaying. She hesitated and faltered. "Dear Mrs. Russell, it is there for you

—if you would only take it, take it altogether!" Lucy said in supplicating tones.

"No," said her visitor firmly. "No, Lucy, do not ask me. You will only make me go away very miserable—more miserable than I was when I came. If you will *lend* it to me, I shall be very glad. I don't hesitate to say it will be a great, great service—it will almost be saving our lives. I would offer to pay you interest, but I don't think you would like that. I told Bertie so; and he said if I were to give you an I—O—U; I don't understand it, Lucy, and you do not understand it, my dear; but he says that is the way."

"There was nothing about lending, I think, in the will," said Lucy, very doubtfully; "but," she added after a moment, with a sudden gleam of cheerfulness. "I will tell you how we can do it. I am to be quite free to do what I please in seven years—"

"In seven years!" poor Mrs. Russell's face seemed to draw out and lengthen, as she said these words, until it was almost as long as the period, though it did not seem easy to see by what means the fact could affect her present purpose. Lucy nodded very cheerfully. She had quite regained her courage and satisfaction with her fate.

"I will *give* it you for seven years," she said, going back to her seat, "and then you can give it me back again, there will be no need for I.O.—what? or anything of the sort. We will be sure to pay each other, if we remember—"

"I shall be sure to remember, Miss Trevor," said Mrs. Russell, almost sternly; "a matter of business like this is not a thing to be forgot."

"Then that is all settled," cried Lucy, quite gaily. "Oh, I am so glad! I have been so unhappy since I was at Hampstead. I thought it must be my fault."

"Not altogether your fault," said Mrs. Russell. "Oh, you must not blame yourself too much, my dear, there was something on both sides; you were a little brusque, and perhaps thinking too much of your money. I should say that was the weak point in your character; and we were proud—we are too proud—that is our besetting sin," she said, with an air of satisfaction.

Mrs. Russell dried the last lingering tears from the corners of her eyes, everything had become tranquil and sweet in the atmosphere once so laden with tragic elements; but still there was an anxious contraction in her forehead, and she looked wistfully at the girl who had so much in her hands.

"I know," said Lucy, "you would like it directly, and I will try, I will try to get it at once. I will send it to you, if I can, to-night; but perhaps not to-night, it might be too late; to-morrow I think I could be quite sure. And then we must fix how much," said Lucy, with something of that intoxication of liberality which children often display, children, but, alas! few people who have much to give. "How many thousand pounds would do?"

Mrs. Russell was stupefied, her eyes opened mechanically to their fullest width, her lips parted with consternation.

"Thousand pounds!" she echoed, aghast. The poor soul had thought of fifty, and a hundred had seemed to her something too magnificent to be dreamed of.

"One thousand is only fifty pounds a year," said

Lucy, "sometimes not that, I believe; it is not very much. What I had thought of was five or six thousand, to make two hundred and fifty pounds a year. Mrs. Ford used to say that two people could live upon that. It is not much, I know, but it would be better, would it not?" the girl said persuasively, "to have a little every year, and always know you were going to have it, than to have a sum of money only once?"

Mrs. Russell looked at the simple young face, all glowing with renewed happiness, till she could look no longer, it seemed to dazzle her. She covered her face with her hands.

"Oh, Lucy, I do not know what to say to you. I have not deserved it, I have not deserved it," she said.

At luncheon Lucy was a changed girl. She had never looked so happy, so bright; the clouds had blown entirely away from her face and her firmament. She had written a letter to her guardian as soon as Mrs. Russell, her head light and giddy with sudden relief from all her trouble, had gone back to Hampstead in the omnibus, to which she had to bend her pride, protesting mutely by every gesture that it was not a thing she had been used to. No more had been said about the paying back. The idea of an income had stunned this astonished woman, had almost had upon her the effect of an opiate, soothing away all her cares and troubles, wrapping her in a soft stupor of ease and happiness. Could it be true? She had given up, without any further murmur or protest, the conditions she brought with her, and which she had meant to insist upon. Lucy's final proposal had taken away her breath; she had not said anything against it, she

had made no remonstrance, no resistance. Her mind was confused with happiness and ease, and the yielding which these sensations bring with them. So poor a careworn woman, distracted with trouble and anxiety she had been when, with her veil over her face to hide the tears that would come against her will, she had been driven down the same long slope of road, sick with hope, and doubt, and terror, feeling every stoppage of the slow, lumbering machine a new agony, yet half glad of everything which delayed the interview she dreaded, the self-humiliation which she could not escape from. How different were her feelings now! She could not believe in the wonderful good fortune which had befallen her; it removed all capability of resistance, it seemed to trickle through all her veins down to her very feet, upward to nourish her confused brain, a subtle calm, an all dissolving dew of happiness. Provided for! was it possible? was it possible? She did not believe it—the word is too weak, she was incapable of taking in the significance of it mentally at all; but it penetrated her and soothed her, and took all pain from her, giving her an all-pervading consciousness of rest.

As for Lucy, she listened to Sir Tom's gossip with that eloquent interest and ready amusement which is the greatest flattery in the world. All his jokes were successful with her, her face responded to him almost before he spoke. Lady Randolph could scarcely believe her eyes; the success of her scheme was too rapid. There was terror in her self-gratulation. Would Tom care for such an easy conquest? and if the guardians could not be got to consent to a marriage, was it possible that this could go on for seven years? She

would have preferred a more gradual progress. Meanwhile, Lucy took an opportunity to speak apart to this kind new friend of hers, while Lady Randolph was preparing for her usual drive.

"May I ask you something?" she said, after she had actually—no other word would describe the process—*wheedled* him up to the drawing-room after luncheon. It was not often Sir Thomas came to luncheon, and Lucy thought it providential.

"Ask me—anything in the world!" he said, with the kind smile which seemed to Lucy to warm and open up all the corners of her heart. It got into the atmosphere like sunshine, and she felt herself open out in it like a flower.

She stood before him very gravely, with her hands folded together, her eyes raised to his, the utmost seriousness in her face, not at all unlike a girl at school, very innocent and modest, but much in earnest, asking for some momentary concession. He had almost put his hand paternally upon the little head, of whose looks he was beginning to grow fond, though, perhaps, in too elder-brotherly a way. It was while Sir Tom's experienced heart was in this soft and yielding state, that the little girl, raising her soft eyes, asked very distinctly,

"Then would you lend me a hundred pounds, if you please?"

Sir Thomas started as if he had been shot.

"A hundred pounds!" he cried, with consternation in every tone.

Lucy laughed with the happiest ease. There was no one with whom she was so much at home.

"It is only till to-morrow. I have written to Mr.

Chervil to come, but he cannot come till to-morrow," she said.

"And you want a hundred pounds, to-day?"

"If you please," said Lucy, calmly; "if you will lend it to me. It would be a pleasure to have it to-day."

Sir Tom's face grew crimson with embarrassment; had he a hundred pounds to lend? he thought it very unlikely; and his wonder was still more profound. This little thing, not much more than a child: what on earth could she want, all at once, with a hundred pounds? he did not know what to say.

"My dear Miss Lucy," he said, (for though this title was incorrect, and against the rules of society, and servant-maidish, he had adopted it as less stiff and distant than Miss Trevor). "My dear Miss Lucy: of course I will do whatever you ask me. But let me ask you, from the uncle point of view, you know—is it right that you should want a hundred pounds all in a moment? Yes, you told me you had a great deal of money; but you have also a very small number of years. I don't ask what you are going to do with it. We have exchanged opinions already, haven't we? about the pleasure of throwing money away. But do you think it is right, and that your guardian will approve?"

"It is quite right," said Lucy, gravely; "and my guardian cannot help but approve, for it is in papa's will, Sir Thomas. Thank you very much. I am not throwing it away. I am *giving it back.*"

What does the little witch mean? he asked himself, with consternation and bewilderment? but what could be done? He went out straightway, and after a

while he managed to get her the hundred pounds. A baronet with a good estate and some reputation, even though he may have no money to speak of, can always manage that. And Lucy accepted it from him quite serenely, as if it had been a shade of Berlin wool, showing on her side no embarrassment, nor any sense that it was inappropriate that he should be her creditor. She gave him only a smile, and a thank you, and apparently thought nothing more of it. Sir Thomas was fairly struck dumb with the adventure; but to Lucy, so far as he could make out, it was the most everyday occurrence. She sent her maid to Hampstead that evening—dressing for dinner by herself, a thing which Lucy, not trained to attendance, was always secretly relieved to do—with a basket of strawberries for Jock, and a letter for Mrs. Russell; and the girl's face beamed when she came downstairs. They took her to the opera that evening, where Lucy sat very tranquilly, veiled by the curtains of the box; and listened conscientiously, though she showed no signs of enthusiasm. She had a private little song of her own going on all the while in her heart.

CHAPTER III.

LUCY'S FIRST VENTURE.

WHILE Lucy's mind was thus soothed and comforted by the consciousness of doing her duty, a very different effect was produced upon her father's executors, who, it is scarcely necessary to say, regarded her attempt to fulfil the commands of the secret codicil

with mingled consternation and fury. Mr. Chervil, who, being at hand, was the first representative of these legal authorities to be appealed to on the matter, had obeyed her first call with some surprise, and had been, as was not unnatural, driven nearly frantic by the quiet intimation given him by the little girl, whom he looked upon as a child, that she intended to use the power entrusted to her.

"What do you know about Codicil F?" he said. "I don't know that there is any Codicil F. I don't believe in it. You are under a mistake, Miss Lucy:" but when she made it apparent to him that her means of knowing were unquestionable, and her determination absolute, Mr. Chervil went a step further—he blasphemed. "It is against every law," he said. "I don't believe it would stand in any court. I don't feel that I should be justified in paying any attention to it. I am sure Rushton would be of my opinion. It was a mere piece of folly, downright madness, delusion—I don't know what to call it."

"But whatever it is," said Lucy, with great prudence, putting forth no theory of her own, "what papa said is law to me." And though his resistance was desperate, she held her own with a gentle pertinacity.

Lucy's aspect was so entirely that of a submissive and dutiful girl, she was so modestly commonplace, so unlike a heroine, that it was a long time before he could believe that this little creature really meant to make a stand upon her rights. He could scarcely believe, even, that she understood what those rights were, or could stand for a moment against his denial of them. When he was driven to remonstrance, a chill of discouragement succeeded the first fury of his refusal. He

tried every oratorical art by sheer stress of nature, denouncing, entreating, imploring all in a breath.

"It is like something out of the Dark Ages," he cried. "It is mere demoralization. You will make a race of paupers, you will ruin the character of every person who comes near you. For God's sake! Miss Lucy, think what you want to do. It is not to give away money, it is to spread ruin far and wide—ruin of all the moral sentiments; you will make people dishonest, you will take away their independence, you will be worse than a civil war! And look here," cried the executor, desperate, "perhaps you think you will get gratitude for it: that people will think you a great benefactor? Not a bit of them! You will sow the wind and reap the whirlwind," he cried, wrath and despair driving him to that great storehouse of poetry with which early training still supplies the most commonplace of Englishmen.

Lucy listened with great attention, and it was an effort for her to restrain her own awe and respect for "a gentleman," and the almost terror with which his excitement, as he paced about her little dainty room, shaking the whole house with his hasty steps, filled her. To see her mild countenance, her slight little form, under the hailstorm of his passion, was half pathetic and half ludicrous. Sometimes she cried, sometimes trembled, but never gave in. Other stormy interviews followed, and letters from Mr. Rushton, in which every argument was addressed both to her "good sense" and "good feeling;" but Lucy had neither the good sense to appreciate their conscientious care of her money, nor the good feeling to allow that her father had in this particular acted like a fool or a

madman. She was wise enough to attempt no argument, but she never gave in; there were moments, indeed, when the two men were in hopes that they had triumphed; but these were only when Lucy herself was wavering and discouraged in regard to the Russells, and unable to decide what to do. The evening after her final interview with Mrs. Russell, she sent for Mr. Chervil again; and it was not without a little panic and beating of her heart that Lucy looked forward to this conclusive meeting. She had to prop herself up by all kind of supports, recalling to herself the misery she had seen, and the efforts to conceal that misery, which were almost more painful still to behold, and, on the other hand, the precision of her father's orders, which entirely suited the case: "If it is a woman, let it be an income upon which she can live and bring up her children," nothing could be more decided than this. Nevertheless, Lucy felt her heart jump to her mouth when she heard Mr. Chervil's heavy yet impetuous feet come hastily upstairs.

And Mr. Chervil, as was natural, made a desperate stand, feeling it to be the last. He made Lucy cry, and gave her a great deal of very unpleasant advice; he went further, he bullied her, and made her blush, asking, coarsely, whether it was for the son's sake that she was so determined to pension the mother? for she had been obliged to give him full particulars of the Russell family and their distresses. It was a terrible morning for the poor little girl. But if the executor ever hoped to make Lucy swerve, or to bully her into giving up her intention, no mistake could be greater. She blushed, and she cried with shame and pain. All the trouble of a child in being violently scolded, the

hurts and wounds, the mortification, the sense of injustice, she felt, but she did not yield an inch. Lucy knew the power she had, and no force on earth would have turned her from it. He might hurt her, that was not hard to do, but change her mind he could not; her gentle obstinacy was invincible; she cried, but she stood fast; and naturally the victory fell to her, after that battle. From the beginning Mr. Chervil knew well enough that if she stood out there was nothing to be done, but it seemed to him that fifty must be more than a match for seventeen; and in this he was mistaken, which is not unusual. When, however, all was over, the capitulation signed and sealed, and Lucy, though tearful, entrenched with all her banners flying upon the field of battle, a new sensation awaited the discomfited and angry guardian of her possessions. He thought he had already put up with as much as flesh and blood could bear, but it may be imagined what Mr. Chervil's feelings were when his ward thus addressed him, putting back a little lock of hair which had got out of its usual tidiness during the struggle, (for though there was no actual fighting—far be it from us to insinuate that the angry guardian went the length of blows, though he would have dearly liked to whip her, had he dared—agitation itself puts a girl's light locks out of order,) and pursuing a last tear into the corner of her eyes:

"I want a hundred pounds, if you please, directly; I borrowed it yesterday," said Lucy, with great composure, "from Sir Thomas, and I said I would pay it back to-day."

"You—borrowed a hundred pounds—from Sir Thomas!" His voice gurgled in his throat. It was a

wonder that he did not have a fit; the blood rushed to his head, his very breath seemed arrested. It was almost as much as his life—being a man of full habit and sanguine temperament—was worth.

"Yes," said Lucy's calm, little soft voice. There was still occasionally the echo of a sob in it, as in a child's voice after a fit of crying, but yet it was quite calm. "Will you write a cheque for him, if you please."

"You will drive me mad, Miss Lucy, before you have done!" cried the excited executor, "all for this woman, this young fellow's mother, this object of your—— And you go and borrow from another man, borrow, actually—money—from another man, you, an unmarried girl! Oh, this is too much! I must put your affairs in Chancery! I must wash my hands of you! borrow money—from a man!"

"But I don't know who else I—could have borrowed it from. Sir Thomas is not just a—man; he is a friend. I like him very much, there is nobody so kind. If I had asked Lady Randolph she would have insisted upon knowing everything; but Sir Thomas understands me—a little," Lucy said.

"Understands you—a little? Well, it is more than I do," cried her guardian; but when he came to think of it, this complication silenced him, for if the young fellow at Hampstead had been the object of any childish infatuation, Sir Thomas could not have been brought into it in this way; and if she had a fancy for Sir Thomas, it was clear the young fellow at Hampstead must be *out* of it. She could not possibly, at her age, be playing off the one against the other. So Mr. Chervil concluded, having just as little confidence

in the purity and simplicity of Lucy's motives as everybody else had; and he gave the cheque with groans of suppressed fury, yet bewilderment. "You don't know the world, Miss Lucy," he said, "though you are very clever. I advise you not to borrow from gentlemen; they are apt to fancy, when a girl does that sort of thing—— And I will not have it!" he added, with some violence. "You are my ward and under age, notwithstanding that mad codicil. If it were not that a great part of the money would go to your little brother in case we broke the will, by George, I should try it!" the outraged executor said.

"Would it—to Jock? Oh, that would be a blessing!" cried Lucy, clasping her hands; then she added, the light fading from her face, "But that would be to go against everything papa said, for Jock is no relation to my Uncle Rainy. Of course," said Lucy, with delightful inconsistency, "when I can do what I like, in seven years time, Jock shall have his full share, and if I were to die he would be my heir; you said so, Mr. Chervil, that made my mind quite easy. But I shall not be able to borrow from Sir Thomas again," she added with a laugh, "because he will not be here."

What could the guardian do more? There was no telling what might happen in seven years; before seven years were over, please God, she would be married—and trust her husband to guard against the dividing of the fortune! It would be better, Mr. Chervil concluded, to put up with the loss of a few thousand pounds than to risk the cutting up of the whole property, and the alienation of a great part of it from poor Rainy's race. Besides, the executor knew that

to break the will would not be an easy matter. The codicil might be eccentric, but old Trevor was sane enough. He growled, but he wrote the cheque, and submitted to everything, though with an ill grace. Lady Randolph offered luncheon to the gentleman from the city, and was pointedly ceremonious, though civil.

"Miss Trevor is rather too young to have such lengthened conferences with gentlemen," she said, "though I have no doubt, Mr. Chervil, I can trust you."

"Trust me, my lady! Why, I am a man with a family!" cried the astonished executor. "I have daughters as old as Miss Lucy." He was confused when Sir Tom's large laugh (for Sir Tom was here again, much amused with the little drama, and almost making his aunt angry by the devotion with which he carried out her scheme) showed him the folly of this little speech, and added awkwardly, "I don't suppose she will come to any harm in your hands, but she's a wild madcap, though she looks so quiet, and as obstinate, as obstinate——"

"Are you all that?" Sir Thomas said, looking at Lucy with the laugh still in his eyes. "You hide it under a wonderfully innocent exterior. It is the lion in lamb's clothing this time. I think you must require my help, aunt, to manage this dangerous young lady."

"Oh! I can dispense with your help," Lady Randolph said, with a little flush of irritation. Decidedly things were going too fast and too far; under the very nose of the executor too, who, no doubt, kept a most keen outlook upon all who surrounded his precious ward. "I am not afraid of Lucy, so long as she is let

alone and left to the occupations suitable to her age." And with this her ladyship rose from the table, and with some impatience bade her young companion to get ready for their drive; though, as everybody could see, even through the closed blinds which kept the dim dining-room cool, it was hours too early for any drive.

"Just a word to you, Sir Thomas, if you'll permit me," Mr. Chervil said. "That dangerous young lady, as you call her, will run through every penny she has, if she is allowed to have her own way. If you would be so kind as to *not* encourage her, it would be real friendship, though she mightn't think so. But as long as any one backs her up ——"

Sir Thomas opened his eyes wide. "Ah, I see! you took what I said *au pied de la lettre*," he said with languid contempt. Now the executor was little experienced in the French, or any foreign tongue, and he did not know what the foot of the letter meant. He cried, "Oh, no, not at all!" apologetically, shocked by his own boldness; and went away bewildered all round, and much troubled in his mind about the stability of the Rainy estate. Mr. Chervil was the most honourable of trustees—his own interest had nothing at all to do with his opposition. But prodigality in business-matters was, to him, the master sin, above all those of the Decalogue. There was, indeed, no commandment there which ordained, "Thou shalt not waste thy money, or give it injudiciously away." But Mr. Chervil felt that this was a mere oversight on the part of the great law-giver, and one which prudent persons had a right to amend on their own account. Mr. Chervil who here felt an unexpressed confidence that

he was better informed (on matters of business) than the Almighty, was very sure that he knew a great deal better than old Trevor. He scouted the old man's ideas as preposterous. That craze of his about *giving it back* was evident madness. Give it back! the thing to be done was exactly the contrary. He himself knew ways of doubling every pound, and building up the great Rainy fortune into proportions colossal and magnificent. But he did not think of any advantage to himself in all this. He was quite content that it should be the little sedate figure of the girl which should be raised, ever higher and higher into the blazing heaven of wealth upon that golden pedestal, heaped with new and ever-renewed ingots. And not only was this his ambition perfectly honest, but there was even in a way something visionary in it, an ideal, something that stood in the place of poetry and art to Mr. Chervil. It was his way of identifying the highest good, the most perfect beauty. A fortune does not appeal to the eye like a statue or a picture; but sometimes it appeals to the mind in a still more superlative way. Old Trevor's executor felt himself capable of working at it with an enthusiasm which Phidias, which Michael Angelo could not have surpassed. "Anch' io pittore." I too have made something all beautiful, all excellent, all but divine, he would have said, had he known how. And when he contemplated the possibility of having his materials taken from him piecemeal, and scattered over the country to produce quite inappreciable results in private holes and corners, his pain and rage and disappointment were almost as great as the sentiments which would have moved the fierce Buonarotti had some wretched bungler got into his studio, and cr-

knobs off the very bit of marble in which already he saw his David. Therefore it was not altogether a sordid sentiment which moved him. There was in it something of the desperation of a sincere fanatic, as well as the regret of a man of business over opportunities foolishly thrown away.

And Lucy, if the truth must be told, got no particular satisfaction out of the proceeding. She thought it right to suggest, though very timidly, that instead of the bigger house, which poor Mrs. Russell's desperation had been contemplating, a smaller house, where she could herself be comfortable, would be the best; and the suggestion was not graciously received. The family indeed which she had so greatly befriended contemplated her with a confusion and embarrassment which made poor Lucy wretched. Mary, the one of them whom she had always liked best, avoided the sight of the benefactor who had saved them all from destruction. When she appeared reluctantly, her cheeks red with shame, and her eyes with crying, she could scarcely look Lucy in the face. "Oh, Miss Trevor! I wish you had not done it. We should have struggled through and been honest," Mary exclaimed averting her eyes; and then she fell a-crying and begged Lucy's pardon with half angry vehemence, declaring she hated herself for her ingratitude. Wondering, bewildered, and sad, Lucy stole away as if she had been a guilty creature from the house to which she had given a little fortune, ease, and security, and comfort. Had she made enemies of them instead of friends? Instead of making them happy, she seemed to have destroyed all family accord, and put everything wrong. Nor was this all the trouble the poor girl had. She had scarcely

got back from that mission of uncomfortable beneficence, when she saw by the general aspect of affairs in Lady Randolph's drawing-room that something was wrong. Lady Randolph herself sat bending, with quite unaccustomed energy, over a piece of work, which Lucy had got to know was her refuge when she was annoyed or disturbed—with a flush under her eyes which was also a sure sign of atmospheric derangement. Sir Thomas was pacing about the room behind backs, and as Lucy came in she saw him (which even in a moment of violent commotion disturbed her orderly soul) tear a newspaper in several pieces, and throw it into the basket under the writing-table: a *new* newspaper, for it was Saturday. What could he mean? Near Lady Randolph was seated old Lady Betsinda full in the light, and looking more like a merchant of old clothes than ever; while Mrs. Berry-Montagu had her usual place in the shadow of the curtains; the two visitors had the conversation in their hands.

"My dear Mary Randolph," Lady Betsinda was saying, "you ought to have taken my advice. Never have anything to do with authors; I say it to everybody, and to you I am sure if I have said it once I have said it a hundred times. They are a beggarly race; they don't print by subscriptions nowadays, but they do far worse. If they cannot get as much out of you as they want, they will make you suffer for it. Have not I told you? When you're good to them, they think they pay you a compliment by accepting it. A great many people think it gives them importance to have such persons about their house; they think that is the way to get a *salon* like the French, but there never was a greater mistake. Authors, so far as I've

seen, are the very dullest people going, if they ever have an idea in their heads, they save it up carefully for their books."

"What would you have them do with it, Lady Betty? waste it upon you and me? most likely we should not understand it," said the other lady, with her soft little sneer. "Come in, come in, Miss Trevor, and sit and learn at Lady Betty's feet."

Lady Randolph bent towards the speaker with a rapid whisper. "Not a word to Lucy about it, for heaven's sake!" she said.

Mrs. Berry-Montagu made no reply; almost all that could be seen of her was the malicious gleam in her eyes.

"Come and learn wisdom," she said, "at the feet of Lady Betsinda. When we have a University like the men, there shall be a chair of Social Experience, and she shall be voted into it by acclamation." Lady Betsinda was a little deaf, and rarely caught all that was said, but she made no show of this imperfection, and went on without asking any questions.

"I have met a great many authors in my day," she said, "they used to be more in society in my time. Now it has become a sort of trade, I hear, like cotton-spinning. Oh, yes, cotton-spinners, my dear, get into society—when they are rich enough—and so do the people that write; but not as they used to do. They are commoner now. It seemed so very clever once to write a book; now, I hear, it's a great deal more clever not to write. I don't give that as *my* opinion; ask Cecilia Montagu, it is she who tells me all the new ideas."

"Have I said so? It is very likely," said that lady,

languidly. "It repays one for a great deal of ingratitude on the part of the world, to have a friend who remembers all one says."

"Oh, I have the best of memories," said Lady Betsinda; "and, as I was saying, if you don't go down on your knees to them they punish you. I was reading somebody's life the other day—I remember her perfectly well, one used to meet her at Lady Cheddar's, and one or two other places—rather pretty and lackadaisical, and very, very civil. Poor thing! one saw she was there on sufferance; but if you will believe me—perhaps you have read the book, Cecilia Montagu? —you would think she was the centre of everything, and all the rest of us nowhere! And so poor Lady Cheddar, a really nice woman, will go down to posterity as the friend of Mrs. So-and-so, whom she asked out of charity! It is enough," said Lady Betsinda, with indignation, "to make one vow one will never read another book as long as one lives."

"Mrs. So-and-so!" said Lady Randoph. "I remember her very well. I think everybody was kind to her. There was some story about her husband, and poor Lady Cheddar took her up and fought all her battles—"

"—And has been rewarded," said Mrs. Berry-Montagu, softly satirical, "with immortality. Good people, what would you have more? Fifty years hence who will know anything about Lady Cheddar except from the life of Mrs. So-and-so? And so it will be in —another case we know of. After all, you see that, though you make so little account of them, it is the poor authors who hold the keys of fame."

"As for the other case, that is not a parallel case

at all," Lady Betsinda cried. "Mrs. So-and-so was bad enough, but she did not put poor dear Lady Cheddar in the papers. No, no, she never put her in the papers; and Lady Cheddar was a woman of a certain age, and people did not need to be told what to think about her. These papers are a disgrace, you know; they are dreadful, nobody is safe."

"But what should we do without them?" said Mrs. Berry-Montagu, lifting up her languishing eyes.

"That's true enough," said Lady Betsinda, softening; "one must know what is going on. But about a young girl, you know; I really think about a young girl——"

Here Lady Randolph interposed with rapid and alarmed dumb-show, and Sir Thomas made a stride forward, with such a lowering brow as Lucy had never seen before. What could be the matter? she wondered; but there the discussion stopped short, and she heard no more.

This was the matter, however: that one of the newspapers of which society is so fond had taken up the romantic dedication of "Imogen," and with an industry that might have been praiseworthy (as the police reports say) if employed in a better cause, had ferreted out a still more romantic edition of the story. It was not true, but what had that mattered? It gave a fancy sketch of Lucy, and her heiress-ship, and her rusticity, and described how the young novelist was to be rewarded with the hand of the wealthy object of his devotion, a devotion which had begun while she was still poor. Lucy had not learned to care for newspapers, and it was not at all difficult to keep it from her. But Sir Thomas gave all belonging to him

a great deal of trouble to soothe him down, and persuade him that nobody cared for such assaults.

"It is quite good-natured; there is no harm intended," Lady Randolph said, "we all get a touch now and then."

"If that is no harm, a punch on the head is still more innocent," said Sir Thomas, savagely, and it was almost by force, and solely because of the fact that this would be still worse for Lucy, that he was restrained. But Lucy never heard of it, and the article sold off at once, before a month was out, the whole edition of "Imogen."

CHAPTER IV.

GOING HOME.

And now the period of Lucy's first experiment in life was over. From all the delicacies with which Lady Randolph's care had surrounded her, and from the atmosphere of refinement to which she had grown accustomed, it was now the moment to descend and go back to the homely house which Jock and she instinctively still called "home." He had come in from Hampstead a day or two before, and lived with Lucy in her little sitting-room, while all the packing went on. The limit of the six months had been relaxed a little, to suit Lady Randolph's convenience, who considered (as did her doctor) that after the fatigues of the season Homburg was a necessity for her. On ordinary occasions Lady Randolph spent a month at the Hall before she went to Homburg; but she had

not thought it prudent this year to take Lucy there, so they had stayed in town till the Parks were like brown paper, and the shutters were up in all the houses. This was a thing that had not happened to Lady Randolph for a long time, and she felt that she was something of a martyr, and that it was for Lucy's sake. However, at last the long days came to an end. Parliament rose, and everybody, to the last lingering official, went out of town. Sir Thomas, who had been at various places in the interval, and whose absence had been a real affliction to Lucy, came back again for a day or two before the final break up. He was not going to Homburg, he was going to Scotland, and it had been arranged that he should act as escort to Lucy on her journey, as Farafield and his own house were on his way to the North. Lady Randolph was not quite sure that she liked this arrangement; the "whole thing," she said to herself, had gone too far. Tom was not prudent; to show his hand to the rest of the guardians at once, and put them all on their guard, was foolish—and as for waiting seven years! Lucy might do it, Lucy, who, her maternal guardian thought, already showed all the signs of being in love; but Tom! he would have a dozen other serious devotions before that. Sir Tom was fond of Platonic relationships—he did not want to marry, not being able, indeed, to afford that luxury, yet he liked the gentle excitement of a sentimental friendship. He liked, even, to feel himself just going over the edge into love, yet keeping himself from going over. He had kept himself from going over so many times, that he knew exactly what twigs to snatch at, and what eddies to take advantage of; therefore it is not to be supposed

that there could be much danger to him from a simple girl. But certainly he had gone further than was at all expedient; Lady Randolph's very anxiety that this time he should be brought to reason, should not catch at any twig, but allow himself to be really carried by the current to the legitimate end, made her unwilling to see matters hurried. Lucy would make him a very nice little wife, and, if he married, his aunt knew that he was far too good a fellow not to be a kind husband; but that Lucy's simple attractions (even including her fortune, which was a charm that would never fail) could hold him for seven years, was not a thing to be hoped for. She spoke to Sir Tom very strongly on the subject the evening before they separated. Lucy and little Jock—who always was a troublesome inmate to Lady Randolph because of his very quietness, the trance of reading, in which she never could be sure that he was not listening—had gone upstairs early. London was very warm and dusty in these August days; the windows were open, but the air that came in was not of a very satisfactory description. Most of the houses were shut up round about, and in the comparative quiet the sounds from the Mews behind were frequently audible. In short, there was about the district the uncomfortable feeling that the appropriate inhabitants had gone, and only a swarm of underground creatures were left, to come forth blinking out of their coverts. Indoors the furniture had all been put into pinafores, the pretty nothings on the tables had been laid away, the china locked up in cabinets. Lady Randolph was starting by the morning mail-train.

"You know, Tom," she said, "I am not at all sure

that it is wise for you to go down with Lucy to-morrow."

"Why, aunt? You know it is on my way," he said with a twinkle in his eye.

"Oh! stuff about it being on your way. You know it would not be on your way at all unless you liked to go."

"Well!" Sir Thomas said, "and after——" he never indulged in the vulgarity of French; but he was given to literal translations, which is more aggravating, and neither one thing nor another, as Lady Randolph said.

"Well! it is just this, most of the guardians live in Farafield, and they will be immediately put on their guard if they see you much with her. There are the Rushtons, the lawyer-people, and *that* Mrs. Stone, who keeps a school. They will both be in arms against you instantly. That father of Lucy's was an old——I don't want to be unkind to anybody that is dead and gone, but——"

"Most likely he thought it would be better for her not to marry," said Sir Thomas tranquilly.

"What folly! well, it would be just like him. I don't think the will would stand if it were ever brought into a court of law. There were the maddest provisos! However, unless it can be broken we must hold by it; and, Tom, you must let me say it, you ought to go more cautiously to work."

"Is it worth the trouble?" he said indifferently. "My dear aunt, before a man takes the pains to work cautiously, he must have set his heart on the prize with some fervour."

"And haven't you done so, Tom? Why, I thought

you were going too far—and too fast. I did not see any doubt, or want of warmth, I assure you. Fervour! well, perhaps, fervour is a strong word; that means difficulty to get over, and resistance, and a struggle perhaps. Poor little Lucy! I don't think there will be much resistance on her part."

"I am not at all so sure of that," he said.

"Why, Tom! Poor child! we can't blame her. She is only seventeen; and you have a way—— Ah, my boy, it is not want of experience that will balk you. You have a way of speaking, and a way of looking. And Lucy is as simple as a little dove, there is no concealment about her. She thinks there is nobody like you."

"Well! perhaps you are right. She thinks there is nobody like me," said Sir Tom, with something of that softening of vanity which makes a man's countenance imbecile when he thinks he is admired; "but," he added with a little laugh, "Lucy is no more in love with me than—I am with you. Like her, I think there is nobody like you—"

"Oh, Tom—Tom, you are a deceiver! My dear, that is nonsense. There is no tie between her and you. The very first night I saw it. Fancy her sitting up to chatter to you—and chattering, she who is so quiet! Why, she is a great deal more open, more at her ease with you than with me."

"All so many things against me," he said, "she is not in love with me, as I tell you, any more than I am with you."

Lady Randolph was struck with great surprise, and so many things poured into her mind to be said that she was silent, and did not say anything, looking at

him with confused impatience, and able to bring out nothing save a "but—but," of bewilderment. At last she enunciated with difficulty and hesitation, "If this is true, which I can't believe—do you mind, Tom?"

"Not much," he said, then laughed and looked her in the face. "You do not understand me, aunt. I think it quite likely that if it were put before her as a suitable arrangement, Lucy might make up her mind to marry me. She is beginning to get perplexed in her life. She has been on the point of confiding in me two or three times."

"What?" said Lady Randolph in great excitement. She could not think of anything but love about which a girl could be confidential, and Bertie Russell, like a Jack-in-the-box, suddenly jumped up in her anxious brain. But Sir Thomas shook his head,

"That is exactly what I cannot tell you," he said. "I thought it might be some entanglement with that young fellow of the book; but it is not that. It is quite possible she might marry me—"

"Well, but, Tom—why should you be so very particular? Think what it would be for the estate. You might pay off everything, and regain the first position in the county. You ought to have the first position in the county. What is Lord Langton in comparison with the Randolphs? A nobody; and all this that girl could do. Only think what her fortune could do. I am not mercenary—I don't think I am mercenary—but when you just realise it. Oh! how often I have said to myself—Your uncle had no right to marry me. He ought to have married somebody with money. And now if you can set it right, why, oh why! should you have any absurd scruples? Of course, Lucy would

be very glad; and she would make you a good little wife. She is not impassioned—she never will be out of her wits about anyone; if that is what you want, Tom."

"No, I don't think that is what I want," he said; "but in the meantime we need not quarrel about it; for you know there are the guardians to be taken into consideration, and it would be foolish to show one's hand. And then there is plenty of time. One ought to go cautiously to work."

He laughed as he quoted all her own little speeches to her. But for her part, Lady Randolph could have cried—how difficult it is to be patient when you are anxious! She had been alarmed by what she thought a too hasty progress; now she was cast down to the depths of trouble by this sudden suggestion that no progress at all had been made. She did not know what to do. It was no use speaking to Tom, so self-willed was he—always taking his own way. She had no patience with him! *Of course* Lucy liked him—how could she help it? And to think that he would run the risk of losing all that for the merest fantastic nonsense. Oh, she had no patience with him! But when he only laughed and made a joke of it all, what was the use of saying anything? Poor Lady Randolph! She could not let things take their own way. She was unhappy not to be able to guide them, and yet she knew that she could not guide them. Either they would go on too quickly, or they would not go on at all.

The effect of this conversation was, that she started in a much less cheerful and hopeful state of mind for that yearly renovation at Homburg. She tried to make

a parting effort for Sir Tom, when she said good-bye to Lucy, who was to leave by a later train. "If Tom stays at the Hall, and there is anything you want advice about, never hesitate to apply to him, my love," she said, "you may have every confidence in him, as much confidence as in myself."

"Oh yes! Lady Randolph," said Lucy with the warmest sincerity. "I should ask him anything—he has always been so kind to me."

"It is more than kindness—he has a real interest in you, Lucy; and you need never fear to trust Tom. He has a heart of gold, and he is the truest friend in the world," Lady Randolph said. She kissed her charge with fervour. Could she say more. When she turned round, who should be watching her but Tom himself, with that twinkle in his eye. The poor lady felt as if she had been detected. She made her exit quite crestfallen, while Sir Thomas paused to tell Lucy he would come back for her half-an-hour before the train started. "It is not everybody that would make himself a railway porter for your service, is it, Miss Lucy?" he said laughing. "Depend upon it, however specious other people may look, it is 'Codlin's the friend!'" He went out after his aunt still laughing; but as for Lucy she looked after him somewhat bewildered. Her reading was not her strong point, and she could not think what "Codlin" had to do with it, or who that personage was.

But what a different Lucy it was that took possession of a special carriage reserved for her own party, to Farafield, with her maid and mountain of luggage, from the humble little Lucy, with two black frocks, who had come to town with Lady Randolph in

February! Her groom, with her horses and Jock's pony, had gone the night before; Jock himself, embracing a big book, was the thing of all her surroundings that was the least changed. Lucy's mind, indeed, was not altered, as were her outward circumstances, but it had expanded and widened, so that she became a little giddy as the journey approached its close, half-pleased, half-alarmed to think of the old life, the familiar streets, the old white parlour with its blue curtains, and the view from the window across the common to Mrs. Stone's school. Sir Thomas, who had travelled with her part of the way, now departing to the smoking-carriage, now coming to inquire into her comfort and the progress she was making in the novel with which he had thoughtfully provided her, joined the party at the last important station.

"You have scarcely read twenty pages," he said, reproachfully, "after all my care in choosing you a pretty book. You have read five times as much, Jock."

Jock looked up on being addressed. Though he was many fathoms deep below the surface, he always heard when he was spoken to, and often when he was not spoken to. He was lying across the arm of one seat, with his book lying on the cushions of another, in a dark blue valley below him. He gave a sidelong look of disdain to his questioner.

"Do you count your pages?" said Jock, with contemptuous satire. "I can tell by what the reading is."

"Hush, Jock! I was not reading at all," Lucy said, "but thinking."

"And what might the thinking be? regretting town,

or welcoming the country? We'll give her, Jock, two pennies for her thoughts."

"You know," said Lucy, "it is not either town or country I was thinking of. I was thinking of Lady Randolph's, and all that was new to me there; and of some things I have had to do, and how I have lived so different from everything before, and now coming back—home. It always was home, I can't call it anything else; but it will be different again. There is no more papa. That does not make me unhappy," said Lucy, the tears coming into her eyes, "for it was what he always trained me to expect; but it will be dreary to go into the house and to find that he is not there, sitting by the fire—with the will."

"The will?" Sir Thomas had no fear to be thought inquisitive, his face was full of kindly interest and sympathy.

"Did I never tell you? that was all his thought. It was his amusement, as long—well, as long as Jock could remember. Don't you recollect, Jock, how he would sit and write a little bit, and rub his hands, and read it to me when I came in. That is how I know so well all he wished me to do. He would put down his newspaper when something occurred to him, and write it down. It pleased him more than anything. Don't you think it is a great pleasure, when anyone is gone, to know exactly what they wished you to do?"

"It is a great bondage sometimes," Sir Thomas said.

"I don't think I shall feel it a bondage. But somehow going back is almost stranger than going away. The rooms at the Terrace will look small; and it will not be prettily furnished, and I shall not have Lady

Randolph to talk to, nor the carriage, nor the visitors—"

"These things are easily got, even the visitors. As for Lady Randolph, perhaps you can put up with me instead. I am very fond of being talked to, and you know she recommended me as her substitute."

"That is very true," said Lucy, with her usual calm; "but then you are going to Scotland to shoot. You are only here on your way."

"There is no saying, if you consult me a great deal, and give me a great many interesting subjects to think about, how long I may linger on my way."

"Oh, as for that!" said Lucy, "there is one thing —very interesting; but then I am not sure if I should tell it to anyone, though it would be a great, a very great comfort. I tried to tell Lady Randolph once, and ask her—and I have wanted so much to tell you —to ask you—"

"Well! I am a sort of an uncle, you know; that was the relationship we decided upon," Sir Thomas said.

Lucy did not say anything. She laughed, looking at him with a very winning confidence and trust in her eyes. They were quite unabashed in their modest gaze, conscious of no timidity, but there was a gentle affection in them which touched him. However, they were now drawing very near Farafield, and even her composed heart began to beat. She called Jock, very reluctant to be roused from his book, to look at the church tower, the spire of the town hall, the big roofs of the market. "I don't want to see them," Jock said; all he wanted was his story. Perhaps it was *her* story which made Lucy so animated; one not yet written in any book.

Sir Thomas had intended to take Lucy home, to see her in her old-new habitation, and make himself acquainted with her surroundings; and to this end he had telegraphed to his servants to send a carriage to meet the train. But Sir Thomas had formed no idea in his mind of the real aspect of the other side of Lucy's life; and it had not occurred to him that the people with whom she was going to stay had a right to guide her, equal to that which his aunt exercised. It was a shock to him to see that respectable couple who stood on the very edge of the station waiting for the train, and moved along by its side, panting yet beaming, as it gradually came to a standstill. "Welcome back, my darlings! welcome home, Lucy and Jock," the woman said. She had not the least pretension to the title of lady. She was enveloped in a large shawl, though it was summer, and she was red and hot. She seized Lucy in her arms, pushing him away as he helped the girl out of the carriage. "Oh, my pet! we have been counting the days, Ford and I; and ain't you thankful to get home after being banished among strangers?" Sir Thomas was confounded. He had thought Lucy was to be pitied for the fantastic arrangement which transferred her from his aunt's house to the care of the old servants, or poor relations, where her position and surroundings would be so different; but the suggestion that she had been banished among strangers took him altogether by surprise. He had been about to take Lucy to the carriage which was waiting; but in a moment she was separated from him, surrounded by these strange people, and drawn in the midst of them towards a fly which was standing near. It was a curious lesson for Sir Tom. He stood

aside and looked on while she was taken out of his hands and deposited in the shabbier vehicle, with a sense of the ludicrous which struggled with a less agreeable feeling. There was another group on the platform to whom Lucy's arrival was very interesting. This was the Rushton family, the lawyer himself, with his wife on his arm, and a tall youth, clad in a light summer suit, with his hands in his pockets, who lounged up and down the railway station after his parents, looking very much out of place and somewhat ashamed of himself. Mrs. Rushton dashed boldly in, into the midst of the salutations of the Fords. "I must say a word to Lucy," she cried. "We have just come in for a moment to welcome you home. Here is your guardian, Lucy, and Raymond, your old play-fellow." It was all that Sir Tom could do not to laugh out. But the laugh was not pleasurable. He thought that anything more artless than this presentation of the old play-fellow at the very earliest moment could not be; but yet what was he himself doing, and what were his inducements to give so much time and attention to this little girl? It was like a scene in the theatre, but so much more dramatic than scenes in the theatre often are. Lucy, in the midst, so eagerly secured by Mrs. Ford, so effusively embraced by the other lady, the leader of the opposition forces; while old Ford stood jealously on one side, and Mr. Rushton, with his hand held out, looked genial and affectionate on the other. The Fords were gloomy, concentrating their whole attention on the opposing band, whereas the Rushtons, who were the assailants, were directing all their smiles and caresses to Lucy, ignoring her relations. "Ray—Ray—I know you are dying to shake

hands with Lucy—come quick and say, how d'ye do. There is no time for any more just now; but I felt I must come just to give you a kiss, and bid you welcome," said Mrs. Rushton. The lawyer for his part shook a finger at her. "Fine stories Chervil has had to tell about you, my young lady," he said.

"Lucy," cried Mrs. Ford in sharp tones, "the fly is waiting, and I am ready to drop. Whoever wishes to see you, can come and see you at the Terrace."

As for Lucy herself she was so anxious to be civil to everybody, and so unaccustomed to the conflict that had thus suddenly sprung up around her, that she could not tell what to do. She looked round wistfully towards Sir Tom, who, for his part, stood quite outside the immediate circle round her, smiling to himself with that quick perception of the "fun" of the situation, which was, Lucy thought with vexation, the chief thing he thought of. She felt wounded that he should laugh at her; but then he was always laughing. Little Jock on the other side was a spectator too; but a scene has a very different aspect according as you look upon it from above or from below. Jock was low down among the feet of all these people. Mrs. Rushton nearly brushed him away with her ample gown; Ray all but knocked him down as he came forward sheepishly to shake hands with Lucy. There was something savage in the energy with which little Jock clutched at his sister's dress. "I say can't they let us alone? I want to get home—I want to get home," cried the little fellow. Nobody took the slightest notice of little Jock. Sir Tom, in the distance, laughed more and more in his moustache, but ruefully. He came forward at last and lifted Jock out from among

the other people's legs. "Come and stand here with me, old fellow; you and I are left out in the cold," said Sir Tom. The tall man and the tiny boy stood out of the crowd, and watched while Lucy was hustled into the fly, Sir Tom laughing, Jock alarmed and gloomy. "She's going away without *me*," Jock said with a naïf consternation. Sir Thomas laughed. "Your day and mine is over, old man," he said.

But Jock at least was not to be forgotten. "Jock, Jock! where are you?" Lucy cried anxiously looking out. The child pulled his hand out of Sir Tom's and rushed away; then the whole party were packed inside the fly, Ford with his knees up to his chin bolt upright, Mrs. Ford sunk back into a corner, loosening her bonnet strings, and "worrited" beyond all description—while Mrs. Rushton stood kissing her hand on the platform. "If you please, Sir Thomas, what am I to do?" said a troubled voice as he looked after them. Then Sir Tom laughed out. It was Lucy's maid, who had been left behind with a number of small matters. He put her into the carriage with secret glee, and sent her off after her mistress. Old Trevor himself could not have made a more grotesque contrast between the old life and the new; how the old man would have chuckled had he seen it! the great heiress shut up in the close fly—the somewhat frightened maid ensconced in the luxurious corner of the open carriage glittering along with a pair of fine horses, and all the prance and dash with which the coachman of a county family thinks it right to maintain the credit of his house in a county town—following the dustiest and stuffiest of flys. This was carrying out his principles on their broadest basis. Sir Thomas chuckled too; it was a

piece of malice after his own heart. "If that's so, let's show fight," he said to himself.

CHAPTER V.

THE TERRACE.

FOUR persons in a fly on a hot August day, one of them large and warm and "worrited," another very tall, with knees up to his chin, do not make a very agreeable party. Lucy, unaccustomed to travelling, had the whirl of the railway still in her head, and its dust oppressing her lungs and spirits; and she had the sensation of rush, and hurry, and crowding, which was peculiarly disagreeable to her orderly mind, and the uncomfortable consciousness of having abandoned her kind companion without a word. Indeed she seemed suddenly to have ceased to be a free agent. She had lost her independence, and even her personality, and had been carried off like a bale of goods, like a box long lost and suddenly found again, but no way consulted as to what was to be done with it. Was it this, or was it the mere vulgarity and discomfort of her surroundings that made her heart sick? The fly had been the only vehicle she had known until six months ago, and the Fords her constant companions, and friendly notice from Mrs. Rushton a thing highly prized and thought of. And she had only been six months away! But as Lucy drove in at the gloomy gateway of the little enclosure which separated the Terrace from the road, and saw the well-known door open, and looked up wistfully at the well-known windows there was no revulsion of happier feeling. "Here

we are at home, Jock," she said faintly, trying to feel as happy as she ought to do. "Is it?" said Jock indifferently. His little face was blank too; they had both fallen out of the clouds, down from the heights, and the contact with mother earth was hard. Lucy felt ashamed of herself that this should be, but she could not help it. It was all so different. Was it possible that the "Aunty Ford" of old was like this? Mrs. Ford was still wearing her mourning. She had crape flowers upon her bonnet, awful counterfeits of nature, cornflowers with stamens of prickly jet. Her shawl was huddled up about her neck, she had taken off her black gloves, as it was so warm, and her face was of a fine crimson. As for Ford, on the contrary, he was neatness itself. He wore a little checked tie very stiffly starched, and his waistcoat, and the thin legs which were so prominent were of checked black and white in a large pattern. Mourning is not so necessary for a man as for a woman. Mrs. Ford's crape flowers, with which her bonnet bristled, were intended for the highest respect. Lucy's depressed sensations were enlivened by a wondering doubt whether she could prevail upon the good woman to abandon these unearthly flowers. Mrs. Ford was talking all the way. "Did you see those Rushtons," she said, "making a dead set at Lucy the very first moment? one would have thought they would have had more pride; and that Raymond, that son of theirs! as if Lucy with the best in London at her feet would look twice at a Raymond? Oh yes, you'll see, they'll be all down upon you like locusts, Lucy; not a young man in the town that won't be thrown at your head. It is your money they're after—only your money. What is that carriage following be-

hind us? It is coming here I declare, it's somebody that has got scent of you already—that's what it is to be an heiress; but it can't be so bad as what you've gone through in London."

"It is only Elizabeth," said Lucy, "oh, how like Sir Tom, he has put her in the carriage; Elizabeth—that is my maid. Would you rather I had not brought a maid, Aunt Ford?"

"A maid—I never see the use of them. You could have had Jane to help you when you wanted any extra dressing," said Mrs. Ford with gloom on her countenance, "what did I tell you, Ford? I said Lady Randolph would be sending some spy to keep a watch upon us. Do you call that a maid? sitting up as grand as possible in the carriage, as if she were the lady and you the servant. It's like Sir Tom, is it? I don't doubt but it's like Sir Tom, *he's* well enough known about here. He's not one you should ever have spoke to, or sat down in the same room with him, if my consent had been asked. Many's the story I could tell about Sir Tom, as you call him; oh, I don't doubt it's quite like him! and many a one he has ruined with his smiling ways."

Jock had not been able so much as to open his book while he rattled along the Farafield streets in the fly, but he had not paid much attention to what was going on; now, however, moved by the practical necessity of getting out of the carriage, he awoke to what was going on around him. He had heard the voice of Mrs. Ford in this same key before. And he looked up suddenly with a surprised but serious countenance.

"Why is Aunty Ford scolding, and us just come? Is it you, or is it me, Lucy?" the little fellow said.

"Me scolding! God forbid," cried the excited woman, and instead of getting out of the fly, she cried, and then in a voice broken with sobs entreated their pardon. "It's all my anxiety," she said, "I can't abide that anything but what's good should come to you. I'd like to keep you safe, like the apple of my eye: and that's what Ford thinks too."

This scene was rather an unpleasant beginning to the second chapter of life on which Lucy was now entering. She stood on the pavement before the familiar door, and tried to occupy the attention of Elizabeth, and keep her from observing Mrs. Ford's agitation and tears. Elizabeth was too refined a person to take any notice. She was the very last improvement in the way of a maid, and could have written her mistress's letters had that been desirable, a most useful attendant to ladies "whose education had been neglected." Lady Randolph had not been at all sure of Lucy's grammar, or her h's when she secured such a treasure. But fortunately Elizabeth's superiority went so far as to have convinced her of the inexpediency of taking any notice of her employer's private affairs. She turned her back upon the fly, where Mrs. Ford was sobbing. She had the air of seeing nothing.

"Sir Thomas made me come in the carriage, Miss Trevor. I could not help it," she said.

"It makes me so happy to see you at home again," Mrs. Ford said, commanding herself. "It is silly, I know, but I can't help crying when I am happy. Come and carry in Miss Lucy's things, Jane. Isn't it a pleasure to see her back again? And now you follow me,

my darling, and I'll let you see what we have done for you," she said with some triumph. Lucy went upstairs with a serious face. She thought she knew what she would find there, everything the same, no difference except in one thing, the old man sitting by the chimney corner, with the big blue folios open on the writing table, spreading the *Times* on his knees, rubbing his hands as she came in, looking up at her with his spectacles pushed up on his forehead. He would not be there, but the place would be full of him and of his image. She took Jock's hand into hers, and led him upstairs. It was a pilgrimage upon which the two orphan children were going. "Come and see where papa used to sit," she said. She had never made great demonstrations of sorrow, but her heart was full of her father, and tears were in her eyes.

Mrs. Ford received them at the door with a look of triumph; but it was with consternation that Lucy saw what had happened. The whole room had been transmogrified. The Fords had given all their minds and a great deal of money, which was of more immediate value, to the great work. Wherever it had been blue, now it was pink. White curtains, very stiff with starch, fluttered at the windows. There was a great deal of gilding about—gilt cornices, gilt chairs, gilt cabinets, and over the mantelpiece an enormous gilt frame enclosing a portrait of old Trevor, which the good people had caused to be painted by a local artist from an old daguerreotype, all with the kind intention of giving pleasure to Lucy. She gave a cry of dismay as she came in. Her father's chair and his writing-table, objects which would have recalled him so much more tenderly than this portrait, had been carried

away. In their place was what the upholsterer called a "lady's chair," covered in one of the newest and most fashionable of cretonnes, stout little cupids disporting themselves on a pink ground—and a gilt and highly decorated work-table. Lucy stood at the door of the room with the checked tears feeling very hot and heavy behind her eyes.

"This is all for you, Lucy," said Mrs. Ford, restored to good humour by the satisfaction with which she regarded her work, "everything in it has been done for you. We have been working at it these three months and more. If you had but heard us talking—'Do you think she would like this? and do you think she'd like that?' and Ford would say, 'I saw a little cabinet in Williams' would just please Lucy,' or 'There's some new curtains at Hemsdon's are the very thing.' We've done nothing else these three months. I declare I don't think I ever slaved so much in my life—to get carpets that matched and a nice chintz, and the rugs and everything. But we kept the two old white rugs. Mr. Hemsdon said they were beauties. I was determined," said the good woman, "that you should find something just as pretty as your fine London drawing-rooms. 'She shan't come home and find nothing but a dingy old place to sit in, and think my Lady Randolph's is a paradise,' is what I said to Ford, and he backed me up in everything. And now here it is, Lucy my darling, and it's all for you, and I hope you'll be as happy in it as I and Ford wish you to be. I couldn't say more if I were to talk from this to Christmas," Mrs. Ford concluded with a tremulous warmth of enthusiasm which arose partly from the delightful consciousness of giving her charge a pleasant

surprise—and partly from a quiver of uncertainty as to whether Lucy's delight would be equal to the occasion. She added instantaneously in a tone which was ready to be defiant, "You may have seen finer in London, I can't say; but this I know, you'll find nothing like it in Farafield, search where you may!"

"Thank you, Aunt Ford," said Lucy faintly. "It is very pretty—but—I was thinking of papa."

These words checked the rising disappointment and displeasure in the mind of Mrs. Ford, who, if not very refined in her perceptions, was kind, and had a sincere if jealous affection for the girl committed to her care. She took Lucy into her arms and consoled her with much petting and caressing. "Yes, my pet, I knew you would feel it. Yes, my pretty! Of course it brings it all back. But after the first you'll find the change of the furniture very comforting," Mrs. Ford said.

Lucy did not know what to say when the first pangs of recollection were over. She went round the room and looked at everything, and did her best to praise. Six months ago she would have thought it all beautiful. Even now she had no opinions on the matter, or taste that she was aware of—but she had been six months away in a different atmosphere, and nothing could undo or change that fact. She said everything she could to show her gratitude. Whatever might be said about the curtains or the carpets, the kindness was indisputable; and it was all very pretty, probably quite as nice as the other way; but it was different. That was all that was to be said—everything was different. She placed herself in the "lady's chair" which stood in the place of her father's old

seat, and found it very comfortable. It was not comfort that was wanting; it was—Lucy did not know what; it was different. Where she sat she could see, through the windows and lines of the curtains, the White House shining in the afternoon sunshine, and the road across the Common, still green with all the freshness of summer. It was very different from the burnt up parks and the rows of London houses, but not in the same way.

"It is all for you, Lucy," said Mrs. Ford, not quite satisfied with the commendation she had received. "For my part there is nothing I like so well as my own parlour. It may be vulgar, but that's my taste. I don't want to be moving about all day long from the drawing-room to the dining-room. I like to feel myself at home. But you are young, and that's a different thing. You have to do as other people do. There's one thing, just one thing I can't give in to: I can't begin at my time of life to be eating my dinner when I should be having my tea; tea's far more to me than any dinner; I never was a great eater, and as for wine I can't abide it. A cup of tea and a bit of toast that's what I like. I'll see to your dinner if you wish, like in your poor papa's time; but I can't change, that's just the one thing I can't do."

"I do not care for dinner," said Lucy, "I will do whatever you do, it does not matter to me."

"If that's so," said Mrs. Ford, brightening; and she came up to her charge and kissed her affectionately, "whatever we can get or whatever we can do to make you happy, Lucy, you have only to say it, never mind the expense. If there is one thing you have a fancy for more than another, if it should be

game, or whatever it is, you shall have it. And this room is yours, my pet. You'll excuse me sitting here, I think there's nothing like my parlour; but when you want me you can always send for me. And here you shall always find everything kept nice, and as for a cup of tea whenever you want it—I shouldn't wonder if you were kept very short up there."

Mrs. Ford jerked her thumb over her shoulder by way of indicating Lucy's former abode. "I know what fine ladies are," she said, "a fine outside and not much within. Horses and carriages and all that show, and footmen waiting, and silver dishes on the table—but not much inside."

"Lady Randolph was not like that," Lucy said, faintly. She did not know whether to laugh or to cry; but her companion took her hesitation as a proof of the correctness of her own judgment, and was triumphant.

"I know 'em," she said. "I don't give myself any airs, Lucy, but I know you'll find nothing like that here. No show, but everything good, and plenty of it, and not so much fuss made about you—for we've got no ends to serve, Ford and me—but if there's a thing you want you shall have it; that is our way, and I don't see but what you may be very happy here. Keep all these folks that will be gathering round you, and making believe to adore you, at a distance, and keep yourself to yourself, and don't put your faith in the Rushtons, nor the Stones, nor any of the Farafield folks; and I don't see, Lucy, my pet, but what you may be very happy here. And now, my darling, I'll go downstairs and see after the tea."

Lucy was left alone accordingly, seated in the

familiar room, so changed and transformed, and looking out somewhat drearily upon the Common, which had not changed, which she had crossed so often in those old days that were never to come back, that could not come back, neither the simple habits of them, nor the gentle ease of mind and happy ignorance of everything beyond their quiet round. It was not a cheerful programme which her present guardian had traced for her, and Lucy, sitting very still, not caring to move, in the most strangely complete and depressing solitude which she had ever been conscious of, went further in her thoughts than Mrs. Ford. Had it all been a mistake? Her father's favourite theory, his pet whim about her, his determination to divide her life between the different worlds of society, one part of it on the higher level, one on the lower, was that to prove itself at once a hopeless blunder? Lucy felt too much dulled and stupefied by the sudden change to be able to think about it; a sensation as of a sudden fall, a precipitate descent down, down, into a world she no longer understood, pervaded her being. Lady Randolph's world had not been a very lofty one; was it possible that it was the mere external change from one kind of house to another, from a companion who dressed with exquisite taste to one who huddled on her common clothes anyhow, and wore crape flowers in her bonnet; from old, soft, mossy Turkey carpets to brilliant modern Brussels, that gave her this sensation of downfall? Lucy did not ask herself the question, nor did it even suggest itself in any formal way to her mind, only a vague sense of the impossibility of the return, the radical change in all things, the space she had traversed which could not be gone

back, overwhelmed her vaguely. If it had been a poor country cottage, a rustic farmhouse, real poverty to contrast with the soft surroundings of wealth, the contrast might have been salutary, and it might have been natural. But the Terrace was nothing but a vulgar, unintelligent copy of the house she had come from; the life set before her now was but a poor imitation of that she had left, but narrowed, and limited, and shut in, cut off by jealous precautions from all the human fellowship that made the other attractive. Ford and his wife, in their little stuffy parlour, at their tea-table, eating their toast and their shrimps, were as respectable in themselves as Lady Randolph at the head of the pretty table covered with flowers, softly lighted, and noiselessly served. Probably they were more honest, more strictly sincere, than she, and their love for Lucy was a very genuine love, more profound than her easy affection. But how was it? Lucy could not tell—to step down all in a moment from Lady Randolph to the Fords was something incomprehensible and impossible. She could not go back these six months; the new life had claimed her, she was not capable of resuming the old where she had left it off. This feeling humiliated and depressed her, she could not tell how or why. Had they been living in a little cottage in the country, had they been quite poor, so that she should have had homely services to do for them, help to give, that would have been practicable; but to come back to the Terrace with her maid, and her horse, and her groom, and her new habits: to have all the indulgences without any of the graces of existence! Lucy sat sadly in the pink room, all newly bedizened and fine, dressed out

by ignorance and kindness for her pleasure, but not pleasing her at all, and pondered, dreary and downhearted. Was it possible that papa himself had not understood? that he did not know what the real differences were, but had made to himself some picture of extravagant splendour on the one side, to be tempered by the Fords and their respectable parlour on the other. Alas! Lucy felt more and more, as she reflected, that poor papa did not understand. It made her heart sore to sit in the place where he had sat, and to contemplate this, and to feel that perhaps, as Sir Thomas had said, to follow out all those regulations of his, which she had thought a happiness and consolation, might turn out nothing less than a bondage. Everything seemed somewhat blank before her, as she sat thus solitary. She knew the routine so well, there was no margin of the unexpected, no novelty to carry her on. She had been so deep in thought that she had not felt a pull at her dress several times repeated. At last Jock could have patience no longer.

"I say," he cried, looking up from his old position upon the great white rug, "Lucy, it is not any good to think."

Lucy was not greatly given to that exercise of thinking, and, to tell the truth, she had not found it to be of very much use.

"What makes you say so, Jock?"

"Oh, because I have tried—often," said the little fellow; "before we went away from here, and after, when I went to school. It is no good, you never find out anything; you wonder and wonder, but you never know any better. Do you think, now," said Jock, with a gleam of moisture in his eyes, "that *he* ever sees us

now, or hears what we are talking about? I wonder—often——"

"I—hope so, Jock," said Lucy; but as she remembered what she had just been thinking she faltered a little, and was not so sure that this was desirable, as in the abstract it seemed to be.

"I wonder," said the little boy—thoughts such as had filled her mind had perhaps been vaguely floating across his firmament also. "I wonder—He would miss his funny old table and his big blue paper if he were to come back now."

"He has now something better: we will not think of that any longer," said Lucy, drying her wet eyes.

"But we have got to think of it," said Jock, reflectively contradicting himself, "that is funny, everything is funny; there is Aunty Ford at the foot of the stairs calling us to go down to tea."

CHAPTER VI.

HOME AND FRIENDS.

THAT very evening, nothwithstanding her supposed fatigue, the little world of Farafield was roused to welcome Lucy. The Rector and his wife, going out for a drive in the cool of the evening, drew up their pony at the door, and left a card and their kind regards, and hoped Miss Trevor was not tired with her journey; and a little later, when Lucy and Jock were preparing to stroll out, as they had been in the habit of doing, upon the Common, they were stopped by a visit from Mrs. Rushton and her son and daughter. "We always come out after dinner in the hot weather,"

the visitor explained, "and it is so delightful to have an object for our walk. I hope you have had a good rest, my dear. What a pleasure," said Mrs. Rushton taking Lucy's hands in hers, and looking at her with enthusiasm, "to see you at home again, and looking so well!"

Lucy was confused by the warmth and *effusion* of this unexpected greeting. Her guardian's wife had never taken much notice of her in the old days; but she was pleased at the same time, for affection is always pleasant, and it was agreeable to find that she had more friends than she was aware of. Raymond, of whom she remembered nothing, except that she had seen him at the railway station, was an ordinary young man, still in his morning suit, by licence of the summer, and the after dinner walk; and wholly undistinguishable from any other young man in that universal garb. He said, "How dy'e do?" and taking his right hand out of his pocket, presented it to her, not without embarrassment. Lucy gave it him back at once, with a great inclination to laugh. She felt herself a great deal older, and more experienced than Raymond, though he was two and twenty and had taken his degree.

"I hope you will not find Farafield dull," said Mrs. Rushton, "we must do what we can to make you like us, Lucy. Have you seen a good deal of society in town? Oh! I know you could not go out; but Lady Randolph is always having company. I suppose you would meet her nephew, Sir Thomas. I hear he is expected at the Hall."

"Yes," said Lucy. "He is on his way to Scotland. He came down here with us to-day."

"Oh! he is on his way to Scotland? Isn't this a little out of the way to Scotland, Ray? I know when *we* went, we had to go a hundred miles round, your father said, to get to that big junction; but you can't always calculate on Sir Thomas. He is a gay deceiver; with that jolly laugh of his, didn't you quite fall in love with him, Lucy? I always say he is the most dangerous man I know."

"I liked him very much," Lucy said.

"And so does Ray. He is quite captivating to young people. He has always been so kind to Ray. One forgets the little stories that are current about him when one comes under the spell. Did you like his aunt equally well, Lucy? Opinions are divided on that score."

"She was very kind to me," said Lucy, "no one ever took so much care of me. She did not talk of it, but one felt all round one—"

"But still you did not care for her? That is what I have always heard—very kind, and that sort of thing; but not attractive."

"Indeed, I am very fond of Lady Randolph," Lucy said, with a flush of annoyance. Her visitor laughed and coughed, confused and disconcerted, though Lucy could not tell why.

"Oh! I only say what I have heard!" she said. "I don't know much of her myself. Sir Thomas is the only member of the family whom I know; and I always frankly admit I think him charming—whatever may be his little faults."

All this time Raymond stood swaying about from one leg to another, with his hands in his pockets. He had received the best of educations, as his mother

proudly declared; but this had not conferred ease of manner or social grace. Lucy could not help longing that he would sit down; but it seemed to be against the young man's principles. He stood between her and the window, swaying about like a cloud upon the wind, but solid enough to shut out the light. Miss Rushton was a very big girl of sixteen in short frocks, who kept half behind her mother, and took shelter under her wing.

"And what are you going to do, my dear, now you have come back? I hope we shall see a great deal of you. You will find yourself a little lost here just for the first. The Fords are excellent people, but you will find yourself a little lost. You must run over to us whenever you feel dull. To-morrow there is some croquet going on—are you fond of croquet? You must come early and have a game, and stay to dinner. In this hot weather we never dress for dinner, for we always have a walk in the cool of the evening. Is that a bargain?" said Mrs. Rushton graciously. "And you must bring little Jock. Do you walk with him as you used to do, Lucy? I think, as a girl, you were the very best sister in the world."

"Jock and I ride," said Lucy, "he was always fond of riding. Lady Randolph sent the horses and the groom, and Jock's pony. She thought I might have them here."

"Certainly, Lucy," Mrs. Rushton said with many nods of her head. "That I am sure your guardians would approve. And what a lucky thing for you, Ray! Now you can get up all sorts of delightful parties. Emmy is beginning to ride very nicely too, and you like it, don't you, dear? They will be so glad to join.

I am *so* delighted to have found something in which you can all join."

"It will be very jolly," said Raymond. That and "How d'ye do?" was all that he contributed to the conversation. And Emmy said nothing at all, except in shy murmurs of assent, and stifled explosions of laughter when her mother said anything she thought amusing. The two young people preceded Mrs. Rushton downstairs when she had said all she had to say; but she came back again, once more seized Lucy's two hands, and added a parting word in her ear.

"I see that friend of yours, that Mrs. Stone, coming this way. She is very well in her own place, Lucy; oh, very nice. I thought she behaved badly to me about Emmy; but that is neither here nor there. Everybody speaks very highly of her—in her own place. But you must not let her get you into her hands, dear. She is dreadfully managing, and by hook or by crook she will have her own way. But you are in a different sphere altogether. Don't forget, my dear Lucy, that you are in a different sphere. I felt that I must just say this. You know what an interest I take in you. Dear child!" said Mrs. Rushton with enthusiasm, giving Lucy a sudden and tender kiss of irrestrainable feeling. "Who would not take an interest in you, so young and so nice and so lonely? Till to-morrow, dear!—"

Mrs. Stone met Mrs. Rushton going down. "So it is true that Lucy has come back," said that able tactician. "I heard a rumour and was coming to inquire —when they told me she was here."

"Just come. My husband being her guardian, I

felt that she had a special claim upon me, poor dear child. I am afraid she is tired with her journey, and agitated with all the associations. I have only been there a moment, I would not stay. I felt it was kindness to postpone a longer visit."

"Thank you for the hint," said Mrs. Stone, calmly pursuing her way upstairs; and she too took Lucy into her arms, if not with enthusiasm, yet with the most affectionate interest; she kissed her, and then held her at arm's length, and looked into her face. "You are very welcome back, my dear," she said, "but, Lucy, there is something new in your face."

"Is there?" said Lucy faintly, "I am a little tired; and then there are so many other things that are new."

Mrs. Stone looked round the room, with such disdain of the shop-upholstery as was natural to a woman who possessed a parlour furnished with Chippendales. She said, "Ah, I see they have been doing something here," then added, "Lucy, you must not trifle with me, it is not that. But," she said, "your hat is on the table, you were going out? it is a sweet evening, and we can talk just as well on the Common. Come, and we will discuss the whole matter out of doors."

Lucy was grateful to be released, for the night was warm, and Jane, Mrs. Ford's maid, had come up with a taper in her hand, and was threatening to light the gas. Mrs. Ford was determined that Lucy should want for nothing, and no consideration of time or season was permitted to interfere with the proper hours for doing everything in this well regulated house. Therefore, though it was somewhat late for Jock, Lucy put on her hat gratefully, and suffered her hand to be

drawn through the arm of her considerate friend, and drew a long and grateful breath as she got out upon the breezy sweep of the Common, which even in the twilight showed a faint flush of the heather. "How sweet it is! this is the one thing which is unchanged," she said.

"Do you find the place changed, Lucy?"

"Perhaps it is me, Mrs. Stone."

"You should say I, my love. Yes, no doubt it is you, Lucy. It could not be otherwise; you have been in so different a sphere, and how could you help feeling it? I think I can understand you. Lady Randolph is—well, I don't know what she is. I confess that I have a little prejudice against her."

"Indeed, you should not have any prejudice," said Lucy earnestly, "she is so good and so kind—oh, far too kind and good for anything I deserve."

"Yes," said Mrs. Stone with a smile, "I understand: a woman with a great deal of tact, Lucy, who knows what is best for you, and takes her measures accordingly; oh yes, I am quite sure Lady Randolph is highly refined, and a thorough lady, and would do nothing that was unbecoming, whereas our good Mrs. Ford is just—Mrs. Ford, and a very good woman. I think it would have been better, Lucy—we have all our little vanities—if your excellent father had sent you to me."

"Yes," said Lucy with a sigh: but there was no enthusiasm in the assent. Mrs. Stone was slightly disappointed. She gave the girl's arm a soft pressure.

"You must let us help you to get through this second beginning: things will never be so bad again. You will get used to the alteration, and new interests

will spring up. What are you doing about little Jock, my dear?"

"Nothing," said Lucy, "he is still so little, and I have no one else. Do you think, really, really I ought to send him, such a little fellow, away from me to some *real* school. He was at Mrs. Russell's, but that was not a real school, and I went to see him whenever I liked."

"Ah! perhaps too often," said Mrs. Stone, with another pressure of her young friend's arm. "I have something to say about that after. But, Lucy, listen. I will tell you what I was thinking. Frank St. Clair, whom you may remember, my nephew, is coming to stay with me again. He is not very well, poor fellow. I will tell you his story some time. He has been unfortunate."

"He who was so kind, who came to see papa?"

"Your father interested him so much, dear! He used to come back and tell me all the clever acute things he said. Yes. Frank St. Clair. This is one of my disappointments, Lucy. Frank was the pride of all our family. We all seemed to have a share in him; his father died young, his mother was poor, and we all helped. He was the cleverest boy I ever saw. At school he was *extraordinary*, no one could stand against him, and you can imagine how proud we all were. Am I boring you with my story, Lucy?"

"How could you think so? I am like Jock about a story, there is nothing I like so much: especially if at the end there was anything—anything that could be done."

"I don't know what you could do, my dear," Mrs. Stone said with a smile, "but your sympathy is sweet.

He was not quite so successful at the University, there is such competition—but still he did very well, and also in his work at the bar. For he is a barrister," said Mrs. Stone with a thrill of pride in her voice, "he has been called, and was just at the beginning of his career—when his health failed. Can you imagine such a disappointment, such a commentary upon the vicissitudes of life! Just when he was in a position to justify all our hopes, his health gave way."

"I am so sorry." Lucy looked up at her friend with the profoundest pity in her blue eyes, but with something else besides, a spark of hidden interest, the gleam with which an explorer's eyes shine when he finds some new sphere of discovery, a new world to conquer. Lucy had not been very happy in her first venture, but she jumped at the thought of a second venture, if it might be found practicable. It was she now who pressed Mrs. Stone's arm, clinging closely to it. "I am so sorry! I hope he may soon get better. Is there nothing that could be done?"

"Rest is all he wants, my dear, rest and a relief from anxiety, and something to do quietly that will not strain him. As soon as I knew you were coming back, I immediately thought of Jock. Poor Frank is very independent, he would be less unhappy if he had something to do. And it is providential for you, for Jock must begin to have something done for his education; I consider it quite providential for you."

"If Mr. St. Clair would be so kind. But—would he like it, a gentleman, and a lawyer, and so clever," said Lucy, puzzled. "Jock is such a little, little fellow."

"He will take Jock," said Mrs. Stone, with tranquil assurance. "He would not take any little boy, of course, but Jock is exceptional, Jock is your brother, and you know my interest in you, Lucy. Yes, my dear, do not be afraid, Frank will take Jock. And now that this is settled—and I wanted to make your mind easy on the subject—let us talk of other things. What is all this story about the Russells, Lucy? You have not allowed Bertie to—he has not, I hope, really acquired any—— It is so difficult to speak to you on such a subject, but you know I am a kind of guardian too. I should not approve of Bertie Russell, I could never give my consent——"

"To what?" said Lucy, with great surprise. "Is it about his book, Mrs. Stone? It was not my fault, indeed, it was not anyone's fault. I suppose he never thought that people would take any notice. It was just a mistake, a foolish thing to do. I think even Lady Randolph, though she was so angry, got to see that at last."

"Then there is nothing more, Lucy; you can assure me, on your word, that there is nothing more?"

Lucy was more surprised than ever.

"What should there be more?" she said.

Mrs. Stone laughed and made no reply.

"So Lady Randolph was angry," she said. "I don't wonder, so was I. We all have the same feeling towards you, Lucy," and here Mrs. Stone laughed again, evidently perceiving a humorous aspect of the question which was unknown to Lucy. "We are all so—fond of you, my dear. Did you see much of the Randolph family when you were there?"

"Only Sir Tom."

"Only Sir Tom! that makes you smile. By the way, he *is* all the Randolph family, I believe; and he is *nice*, Lucy? I have met him, and I thought him very pleasant; but he has not a very good character, I am afraid. He has been what people call wild; but now that he is getting old, no doubt he is mending his ways."

Mrs. Stone gave Lucy a keen glance of inquiry as she said this; but, as a matter of fact, Lucy at eighteen honestly thought Sir Thomas old, and made no protest, which satisfied her friend. She said, after a pause,

"Now, I have a pleasant surprise to give you. Katie Russell is here; I am looking for a situation for her. She has finished her education, and I wish to place her in a thoroughly nice family."

"Oh!" cried Lucy, with pained surprise. "I thought that Mrs. Russell—I thought that *now* they were all to be at home."

"Since she came into that money? Oh, no, it is not enough for that; besides, even if it were more than it is, Katie ought to do something, to make a life for herself. It was a great God-send, the money, but it is not enough for any great change in their life."

"I thought—it was enough to live on," said Lucy, feeling a great flush of shame come over her face. It had not given her much satisfaction in any way, but to hear that it was a failure altogether struck her a very keen and unexpected blow.

"Oh, no, my dear, no," said Mrs. Stone, all unaware of Lucy's interest in the matter, "a pittance! merely enough to give them a little more comfort, joined to what they have."

Lucy went home rather subdued after this interview. She did not see Katie, who was out with Miss Southwood, and she was rather glad to escape that meeting. She called Jock back from his wanderings among the heather, and led him home, with his little arms twined round hers. Lucy felt very much subdued, perhaps because she was tired. She drew little Jock very close to her, and felt something like the twilight dimness stealing into her mind.

"Are you tired?" she said; "you ought to be in bed. I think I am tired too; Jock, are you glad to be at home?"

"I don't know if it's home," said Jock, looking up at her with his big eyes.

"Neither do I," said Lucy, drearily. "But it is all we have for home," she added, with a sigh. "Anyhow, it is you and me, Jock; things cannot be so very bad so long as there is you and me."

To this Jock assented with a reservation.

"I suppose I shall have to go to school, Lucy; all the other fellows go to school."

"I have got a tutor for you, dear; you will not have to go away. Mr. St. Clair, that used to come and see papa. It is providential, Mrs. Stone says."

"What, that fat fellow in the black coat? I don't mind," said Jock. "I think he is a duffer, he's so fat; but I don't mind. You don't know what that means, Lucy."

"You should not say such naughty words, that is what you learnt at school;" said Lucy, with disapproval. "I don't think you learned anything else there."

"Duffer is not a naughty word, it means just nothing; but I don't mind him at all," said Jock, with

indulgence. He was quite willing to undergo the experiment. "I should like to have another try," he said.

When they got to the house it was as dark as an August evening ever is, and Mrs. Ford, with a candle in her hand, was beginning to fasten up the windows and doors. She had again put on her stern aspect, and looked very severe and solemn, as she followed them upstairs. "It is a great deal too late for that child," she said. "He ought to have been in bed an hour ago. So you have had visitors, Lucy? I think they might have been so civil as to ask for me. After all, though the house may be kept for your convenience, it's me that am the mistress of it. And I expect civility, if there's nothing more to be looked for. I do expect that."

"I am very sorry, Aunt Ford."

"You must be something more than sorry. You must let them see you won't stand it. As for that Mrs. Rushton, I think she is insufferable. She wants to keep you in her set. And Raymond, what does he want here the first evening? *You* never knew Ray Rushton; whatever they may say, don't you put any faith in them, Lucy. She's a designing woman; and I mistrust her, bringing her son the first day."

"You tell me to put no faith in Mrs. Rushton, and she tells me to beware of Mrs. Stone, and they both shake their heads about Lady Randolph," said Lucy with a smile, that was not happy. "If I am to do what you all tell me, don't you think, Aunt Ford, I shall be very lonely? for these are all the friends I have."

"My pet," said Mrs. Ford; "don't you be afraid, you'll get friends in plenty, friends always turn up for

a girl who is—a good girl," she added, after a momentary pause. Perhaps she had not intended originally to conclude her sentence in this simple and highly moral way.

CHAPTER VII.

CHANGED.

LUCY spent two or three days after this in comparative solitude. Her friends, both the Rushtons and Mrs. Stone agreed in feeling that it would be indecorous to make any rush at her. It was a suggestion forced upon each of them by the too great eagerness of the other, and both concluded that it would be well to adopt a more dignified course, and to leave her to herself for the moment. Katie Russell had gone on a visit of two or three days' duration, and Lucy found herself thus at full liberty to realise her loneliness. The weather, as it happened, was very hot, and Jock and she were shut up for the greater part of the day in the glaring room, where there was no provision for very hot weather, no sun-blinds or shutters, but everything open to the blazing sun in the day, and all lighted up with blazing gas at night. When after those long and weary days little Jock went tired and cross to bed, unwilling to go, yet glad to get the day over, his sister sat alone in the pink drawing-room in the unshadowed flood of the gas-light, and thought with the tenderest longing of all she had left behind, and with a sinking at her heart beyond describing, of all that was before her. The Fords were in their parlour below, which they preferred, he reading his paper, she mending

stockings tranquilly, at the table with its oil-cloth cover. Lucy had not required any derangement of their habits. She sat with them meekly at table, without asking for anything beyond what they chose to give her; but she had found at once that, after the repast was over, she was expected to return to her own luxurious apartment, the room which they were proudly conscious had cost more than any other room in Farafield, not to speak of the trouble that had been taken over it—and in which there was a piano and books, and all the things with which girls are supposed to be amused. Lucy had been called upon by two of the most important people in Farafield, she had taken several walks and one ride, and many substantial meals had been set before her at their comfortable table; what could any girl in her senses want more? And now she had that beautiful drawing-room to return to, where there was provision for both mind and body, sofas to repose upon, and a piano to play, and books to read, and where she could certainly gratify herself with the consciousness of being mistress of a room which had not its equal in Farafield. Mrs. Ford saw no reason why she should give up her own evening leisure, the purring quiet of that final hour before bed-time, when she sat content after supper was over, and all the affairs of the day concluded. She did her duty by Lucy. She bought sweetbreads and other delicacies, instead of the beefsteak which was so much cheaper, and which Ford liked just as well as the greatest dainty. She spared no expense upon her guest. She was ready to give her a cup of tea half a dozen times a day. She had planned a variety of puddings that there might be something different at every meal: and to conclude, she had given

Lucy the best of advice. What could she be expected to do more?

But Lucy sat very disconsolate in front of the shining steel fire-place filled up with shavings, amid that blaze of gas, without even the little stir of a fire which might have given companionship at another season. She felt like a stranded sailor, like some one shipwrecked on a very clean, bright, polished desert island, where, however, there was not even the consolation of struggling for your living, to keep you alive. She pondered all things that had happened, and that were going to happen. It had given her a painful sensation to hear Mrs. Stone speak of the Russells, and of the money which had come to them, which was just enough to enable them to live in comfort, as Lucy had intended. Had that been a failure, that first effort? And then she thought of the new claimant, the poor gentleman whom Mrs. Stone had hoped might be Lord Chancellor one day, and who was only able to be tutor to Jock. Surely it would be a right thing to give him enough to remove anxiety, as Mrs. Stone had said. And this time Lucy thought she would take care that there was enough, that no one should say it was a pittance. This idea made her face glow with as much shame as if she had cheated these poor people, to whom she had meant to be kind. How was she to know what was enough? especially for a gentleman. Oh, Lucy thought, if I could but ask some one! If some one would but tell me! but who was there whom she could consult on such a subject? Her guardians, instead of helping her, would certainly do all they could to hinder her. They would put every kind of obstacle in her way. Instead of aiding her to make her cal-

culations and ascertain how much was wanted, they would beat her down to the last penny, and try to persuade her that half of what she wanted to give would do. How difficult was this commission she held, this office of dispenser, almoner of posthumous bounty! Oh, if her father had but done it himself!—he was old, he had experience, he must have known much better than she could know. But here Lucy stopped short, and bethought herself of the conclusion that had been forced upon her, that poor papa did not understand. The world in which her timid footsteps were finding out painfully unaccustomed tracks, was one of which even his keen eyes had not found out the conditions. In her stumblings and gropings she had already discovered more than his three score and ten years of keen, imperfect theory had taught him. And now it was her part to suffer all the inconveniences and vexations, which in his ignorance he had fixed upon her life. It never occurred to Lucy to make any effort to escape from them, or even to remain quiescent and refrain from doing the difficult things he had left her to do. She was determined to execute his will in every detail. Should she die even of this *ennui* and loneliness, she would yet bear it until the appointed moment; and, though she might have no more success than with the Russells, still she must flounder on. If she could only find somebody to help her, to give her a little guidance, to tell her how much, not how little, she ought to give. There was one indeed who might be a help to her, who would understand. But was it possible that even Sir Tom had deserted her? Three days, and he had not come to see her! At this thought there came into Lucy's eyes something that felt very like a tear.

This, however, was the last of these silent days. In the morning Katie Russell burst upon her, all radiant with pleasure, "Oh, what a lucky girl you are!" Katie cried, "you have got all we used to talk of, Lucy. I never thought it would come true; but here you are, just looking the same as ever, though you have been living among swells; and come down to dazzle us all at Farafield, with beautiful horses, and heaps of money, and everybody after you. To think that all this should have happened to you, and nothing at all to me."

Lucy did not like her friend's tone. What had come over her that everything seemed to hurt her? "I don't think very much has happened to me," she said. "What has happened was all before I left here."

Katie shook her head and her curly locks, till she had almost shaken them off. "I know a great deal more than you think. I know what you were doing in London, and how you went riding about, and turning people's heads. What a lucky girl you are, with everything that heart can desire! I don't envy you, not wicked envy, because you are always as good as gold, and never give yourself airs; but you *are* a lucky girl. You don't even know how different we poor ones are. I have never turned anyone's head," said Katie, with a sigh.

"Do not talk of anything so silly," said Lucy blushing, she did not quite know why. "I think you are laughing at me—and to laugh at me is not kind, for I am not clever as you are, and cannot make fun of you. Katie, tell me all about yourself, what you are doing; and tell me how they all are at Hampstead, and if they have got into the new house."

"I am doing—I don't know what I am doing," said

Katie, "dancing attendance on Mrs. Stone and old Southernwood. They are going to get me a situation in some *nice* family. I wish the nice family would turn up, for I am very tired waiting and wasting my holidays in this old place. It is nice being here? Oh, I know what you will say, it is very nice, and I am very ungrateful. But, though it is nice, it is a school, Lucy; and mamma does not want me at home, and I have got no other place to go. Lady Langton has been very kind, she asked me to go there for three days. But it's dreary always coming back to school, for the White House is only school when all is said. They are all right at Hampstead, so far as I know. Did you hear what happened? Mamma has come in to some money. It is not a very great sum, but it is a great help. It was some old relations, that no one had ever thought of, and mamma says it might just as well have been the double, for they were *dreadfully* rich. But anyhow it has been a great help. With what she had before I believe they have quite enough to live on now, without doing anything," Katie said, with a little pride.

To all this Lucy listened with a countenance blank of all expression. She had been half afraid of her friend's gratitude; but there was something in this complete ignorance which was very bewildering. And when she looked at her own generosity through Katie's eyes, so to speak, and saw it *on the other side*, she felt, too, that "it might as well have been the double," and contemplated her own action with a mixture of shame and regret, instead of the satisfaction which she had vainly felt at first. And this little discovery made her first wound smart all the more. A certain fear crept

over her. She would have liked to stop her ears from further revelations had she been able. But as that was impossible, Lucy listened patiently, with a blank countenance, trying hard to dismiss all appearance of feeling from her face.

"Mamma would like me to stay at home too," Katie continued. "She cannot bear me to be a governess. But I could not do it; stay at home and sink down into Hampstead tea-parties—oh, I could not do it! If I get into a good family, Maud and the others will stand by me, and I shall have some fun at least and see life. To have only enough to live on, and to live at Hampstead, is more than I *could* put up with. Bertie, he has gone into chambers, he doesn't live with mamma now. I don't blame him, do you, Lucy? It must have been so slow for him, a young man. And now he has some money of his own, of course he has himself to think of. He is always—" Katie said slowly, watching her friend's face; "*always* talking of you."

Lucy did not make any response; but she was surprised by this unexpected change in the strain, and looked up involuntarily, with a half inquiry in her eyes.

"Oh, constantly!" said Katie, with a mixture of natural mischief and more serious purpose, not quite able to give up the pleasure of laughing at her companion, yet very seriously determined to help her brother. "He says you are cross about that dedication. How could you be cross about it? such a lovely dedication, making you into a famous person all at once. It is just the same as Dante did, and Petrarch, and all the poets, Bertie says. And it has brought him luck,

Lucy, do you mind? He wants so much to come down here."

"Why should I mind?" Lucy asked. Bertie Russell had floated out of her recollection; why should his movements concern her? even the dedication, and all the annoyance it had brought, affected her no more.

"That is quite true, why should you mind?" Katie said, with some pique. "One more or less doesn't matter, when there are so many. He wants to come down and study the scenery for his next book. He means to lay the scene here; won't it be exciting? People will be sure to say he has studied the characters too."

"I don't think there are many characters here," Lucy said.

"Oh, don't you think so? If I were to write a book I know whom I should put in; the Missis and little Southernwood, and that fat St. Clair; and old Mademoiselle finding out everything about everybody. Oh, I should soon make up a book if I could write —I wish I could write," cried Katie, with flashing eyes.

Was it really so? Was Katie vulgar too? Lucy felt herself shrink involuntarily. She asked herself whether, in the old schoolgirl days, there had been chatter like this which had not disgusted her, or if Katie had deteriorated.

"Do not speak so," she said; "Katie, it is not like you."

"Oh, yes, it is quite like me. I always was wicked, you were the good one, Lucy. I hope Bertie will take them all off; and I hope you will not be cross to him, Lucy; that would take all the heart out of him. Poor

old Bertie! he thinks you are an angel, that is all he knows."

"I am never cross," said Lucy, wounded. What had happened to her? Had her eyes been anointed by that disenchanting touch which turns all the glories of fairyland into dross and tinsel? or was she really cross with everybody and out of tune? She could not tell herself which it was.

"You are cross now," cried Katie, growing red; and then the hasty tears started to her eyes, and she complained that her friend was "changed." What could Lucy say? either it was true, or it was Katie that was changed. "You are a great lady now," the girl cried, "with grand friends and everything you wish for; and I am only a poor governess, not fit company for you."

This reproach went to Lucy's heart. She could not defend herself from such an accusation; it took her entirely without defence, without the power of saying anything for herself; and she had never had any quarrels in the old days. Thus the two girls parted, Katie running across the Common, with red eyes, in high dudgeon, though there was so little cause for it, while Lucy stood at the window looking after her piteously, and with an aching heart. Changed! yes, everything was changed, either within or without: but which poor Lucy could not tell. She scarcely knew how long she stood there, and she was so occupied with Katie and the pang of this parting with her, that she did not see another visitor approaching from the town, though he was a very welcome visitor indeed. When she heard his voice coming up the stair, her heart jumped with pleasure. He had not deserted her then, and

gone away without seeing her. She turned round and opened the door of the drawing-room in the simplicity of her pleasure.

"I am so glad to see you," she said, with fervour; and Sir Tom came in smiling, with every appearance of being glad to see her too.

"I thought it best not to come too soon," Sir Thomas said, "for your old lady did not like the looks of me, Miss Lucy. Perhaps, I thought, she might like me even worse than my looks; but this is luck to find you alone."

"Oh, but I am always alone," said Lucy, her countenance falling. "This is not like Grosvenor Street, Sir Thomas; most of the time I see nobody at all; and when people come they say that I am changed."

"Somebody has been vexing you," said Sir Thomas, with his sympathetic look. "Never mind, no one who really knows you will think you changed; and I hope you are happy on the whole, among your old friends?"

Lucy shook her head.

"It is not that they are not kind," she said, "they are all very kind—but they will not permit me to think that other people are kind too; everyone bids me to beware of some one else. You laugh, but I could cry; and it makes me that I don't know what to do."

"They bid you beware of me? Well, I suppose that was to be expected," Sir Thomas said, with a laugh.

"Oh, not only of you, but of each other; and Aunt Ford warns me against them all. Well, it is amusing, I suppose," said Lucy, "but it does not amuse me," and the tears came into her eyes.

"My dear little girl! (I am an uncle, you know), things will mend," said Sir Tom. "Come, tell me what they say of me. Did they say I was an extravagant fool, and had wasted all my living like the prodigal? Alas! that is true, Lucy. It may be uncharitable to say it, but the ladies are quite right; and if it were not for that excellent plan of the uncle, perhaps, as they tell you, it would be better for you to have nothing to do with me."

"I do not believe that," cried Lucy, almost with vehemence. And then she paused and looked at him anxiously, and, with a crimson colour gradually coming over her face, asked in a low tone, "Sir Thomas, do not be angry, are you *poor?*"

He grew red too, with surprise, but then laughed.

"Well," he said, "yes, for my position I certainly am. When a man has a great house to keep up, and a number of expenses, if he is not rich he must be poor."

"Ah! but I don't think that could be what papa meant," cried Lucy, with a profound sigh.

"I cannot tell, nor what you mean either, my little Lucy," he said. "I feel very much like an uncle today, so you must pardon the familiarity; you are so little, and so young, and I am so *flétri*, with crows-feet beyond counting. Lucy, I have come to bid you good-bye; I am going to Scotland, you know."

"Oh!" said Lucy, her countenance falling. "I hoped—we hoped—you were not going directly. So long as you were near, I felt that there was some one —— Must you really go, Sir Tom?"

Neither of them noticed at the moment the sudden familiarity into which they had fallen, and Lucy's dis-

may was so candid that it was all Sir Tom could do to keep from a caress, such as would have been very appropriate to his assumed character, but not very consistent with the partial guardianship he had been trusted with.

"It is very sweet of you to be sorry," he said, rising and walking to the window, where he stood looking out for a moment with his back to her, "but I am afraid I must go; at all events, it will be better for me to go. If you want anything very urgently, write to me, or send me a telegram; but I don't suppose you will have any very pressing necessities," he said, turning round with a smile.

"No," said Lucy, very downcast; "oh, it is not that: I have not any necessities, I wish I had. It is just—it is only—one wants some one to speak to, some one to tell——"

She was so disappointed that there came a little quiver into her lips and quaver in her tone. Had he been right? Was it really true that she was no more in love with him than he was with his old aunt? Sir Thomas was only human, and an amiable vanity was warm in him. A pleasant little thrill of surprise and gratitude went through his heart. Was it perhaps possible? —but Lucy made haste to add:

"You are the only person that I could tell something to, something that is on my mind. My guardians know, so it is not quite, quite a secret: but no one else knows: and when I go to them they always oppose me —at least, they did everything they could against me the one time; and I thought if I could tell you, who are a gentleman, and have experience, it would be such a comfort—and perhaps you could guide me in

doing what I have to do. Papa did not say I was to tell nobody. I am sure he would have liked me to have some one to stand by me, since you are so kind, Sir Tom."

"You may calculate upon me, Miss Lucy. What is it? or do you want to tell me now, when I am going away?"

His tone was cooled, chilled. Lucy did not quite know how, but she felt it. Almost for the first time since she had known him, Sir Thomas looked at her with no wavering of expression in his face, no twinkle in his eye.

"It will perhaps—be a bore to you," she said, chilled too, and hesitating.

"You learned that word in town," he said, melting, and relaxing into his habitual laugh. "Come, tell me; when I know, then I shall be able to advise, and you will find me infallible. Something your guardians oppose? then I suppose it must be a desire you have to be kind to other people, Lucy. They could not refuse you any little wants of your own."

"How clever you are, Sir Tom!" said Lucy, lighting up, "that is just what it is. Papa left me a great deal of money—I believe it is really a great deal of money—to give away. Perhaps you may have noticed that I have been rude, very rude, in asking if people were—poor."

"You asked *me* so ten minutes ago," he said.

"Oh! you must not think I meant—— Sir Thomas, papa says in his will, and he has said it to me often—not to waste the money, giving a little here, and a little there, but, when I could find out a fit occasion, to provide for somebody, to put them quite above want."

"And the thought crossed your sweet little soul," he said with one of his big laughs, "my dear child! to provide for me."

"No! Oh no! I never could have been so impertinent, indeed that was not what I meant; only it flashed across me how much better, if I could, to give it to some one I liked, than to some one I knew nothing about and didn't care for; but then it was not to be people I cared for—only people who were poor."

"Lucy, do you care for me?"

"Very much, Sir Tom," she said with a brightness quite unusual to her, turning upon him eyes which met his with perfect frankness and calm. Will it be believed that Sir Thomas was utterly disgusted by this quite candid, affectionate, innocent response?

"Ah! that is precisely what I said," he muttered to himself, jumping up impatiently from his chair; then he laughed and sat down again.

"Well, well, tell me how I can help you. This money is to be spent on the deserving poor. In short it is a charitable fund."

"There is nothing about deserving. It is a very great deal of money. It is nearly as much as the half of what I have got. What papa wished was that it should be *given back*."

"The half of what you have got!" Sir Thomas stared at her bewildered, in his mind making a rapid calculation that, with the half of what she had got, Lucy would no longer be the greatest heiress in England. He was not sorry. She would still have a great fortune. Somehow, indeed, it pleased and conciliated him that she should be put down from that

high pedestal. This was his only reflection on the subject. "What are you to do? are you to establish institutions, or build hospitals?" he said.

"Oh, no, nothing of that kind; only to provide for those that want, not for the very, very poor, at least not always; but for poor people who are not poor. Do you know what I mean, Sir Thomas? for those who have been well off."

"I understand: like me—poor ladies, and poor gentlemen."

"We were not ladies and gentlemen ourselves. It is not confined to them," said Lucy doubtfully, "families that are struggling to live, whether they are gentlemen, or whether they are not, clerks like my Uncle Rainy, or schoolmasters like papa. Do you consider it very insulting to offer people money, when you see that they want it very much?"

"Well, that depends," said Sir Thomas, recovering his humorous look, "upon the person who offers, and the person to whom it is offered. It happens so rarely that one has no experience on the subject."

"Do you remember, Sir Thomas, when I borrowed that hundred pounds?" Lucy said. "That was for one, it was my first, my very first. She was very much offended, and then she said she would take it as a loan. I cheated her into it," the girl said with glee, "I told her I could not give any loans, papa never said anything about loans, but she could give it me back if she wished when I am my own mistress in seven years. Don't you think she will forget before that time? It would be rather dreadful to have it back."

"That depends also," he said, "but I think it very likely that she will forget. Only take care, take care.

Presents of a hundred pounds are very pleasant things. You will have crowds of claimants if you don't mind."

"A hundred pounds!" said Lucy, "oh, it was not an insignificant thing like that!"

"You think that insignificant? You have princely notions, it must be allowed. Might one ask—"

"I counted up very closely," Lucy said. She was drawn along by the tide of her own confidences, "for it was no use giving a little bit that would be swallowed up directly, and do no good. You see it was a lady, and ladies are not so expensive as men. In that case, and it was my first, it was six thousand pounds."

"Six thousand pounds!" Sir Thomas sprang to his feet with comical consternation, as if he had been struck by electricity. "My dear little girl," he said half tragically, half laughing, "do you know what you are doing? Are you sure this is in your father's will? and do your guardians allow it! I feel my head going round and round. Six thousand pounds! to some one not related to you, a stranger."

"Oh, yes," said Lucy earnestly, "or it would not be giving it back. My guardians oppose it as much as ever they can."

"And I don't wonder at it," cried Sir Thomas. "I think I should oppose it too if I were one of them. My dear little Lucy, you are upsetting the very principles of political economy. Do you know what that means? You will demoralise everybody you come in contact with. Even I, though my instincts are not mendicant, it is all I can do not to hold out my hand

for something. I shall be doing it if I stay much longer," he said.

Lucy looked at him with a dubious, half alarmed look. She never was quite sure whether he was in jest or earnest, and the possibility, even the most distant possibility that he could mean— Even Lucy's imagination, however, could not go so far as that. He could read her doubt in her face, and laughed out.

"I warn you to take care," he said. "You will be the ruin of all your friends; but, Lucy, Lucy, this is a very wonderful business, it is like a fairy tale. You gave away six thousand pounds, and were permitted to do so at your age? and you mean to do it again—and again?"

"Oh, as often as ever I can," Lucy said fervently. "I cannot bear to think how many people may be in want of it, and that I don't know them, and don't know how to find them out. This makes me very unhappy when I think of it. Perhaps you will help me to find them—?"

"No, that I cannot promise to do. I warn you I shall be holding out my own hand presently. On the contrary, I will keep people out of your knowledge. You will ruin all our principles," he said.

"But when it is in the will," cried Lucy. It is unconceivable how much lighter her heart felt, since she had told him. There was a little flush on her cheeks, and her eyes shone with a pleasant light. She could have gone on talking for hours now that the floodgates were open. It was so easy to talk to Sir Tom. His very laugh was kind, he never found fault, or if he did that was as pleasant as the rest; she had a kind of

frank admiration of him, and trust in him, such as some girls feel for an elder brother. The unusual gleam of excitement in her face made the little quiet Lucy pretty and interesting, and Sir Thomas was flattered and piqued at once by the enthusiasm of affectionate faith which was in her eyes. It piqued him, and it pleased him—that he should have all this, and yet no more. He had got a great deal more in his life, and looked for it, and the absence of it made him a little impatient.

"Well," he said, "you will go through the world like a good fairy, and I hope the good you will do, will make up for the demoralisation your want of principle will lead to. But before my principles are ruined, Lucy, goodbye, I must go. I have written my address there in your blotting book, and if you want me, or if you want to ask me anything, be sure you do it. Thank you for taking me into your confidence. But now I must go away."

Lucy got up to say goodbye, but her heart sank. "Oh, must you go?" she said, "I am so sorry. While you were there the place was not quite so lonely. But I hope you will like the shooting very much," she said with a sigh, and a sense of real self-sacrifice. Her eyes got moist in spite of herself; and Sir Thomas bent over her, and kissed her forehead, or rather her hair, in spite of himself. He ought not to have done it, and he was half ashamed of having done it. "Goodbye, my little Lucy," he cried. As for Lucy, she took this kiss "sedately" like the poet's heroine. It seemed so natural, she liked him so much; she was glad he liked her a little too.

CHAPTER VIII.

A NEW ADVISER.

Lucy was greatly comforted by the visit of Sir Thomas. It made her sad to see him go away, and the consciousness that he was no longer within reach raised for the moment another cloud upon her horizon; but on the whole it was an exhilaration to her to have spoken to him, to have shared her secret with him. She had, as she said, tried to communicate it to Lady Randolph in the early days of their companionship; but it had been so very far from Lady Randolph's thoughts, that Lucy's timid hint had made no impression on her mind. Neither would Sir Thomas have been capable of understanding had she spoken less plainly than she did; but Lucy at last had spoken very plainly—and he had understood. He had not given her any valuable advice. In such circumstances there is very little advice practicable; but he had understood, which is such a great matter. She knew no better what to do, how to turn, and how to distribute the money, than she had done at the first; but yet she was easier in her mind. She had talked it over, and it had done her good. Henceforward she was not alone in her possession of this secret. A secret is a very heavy burden to be borne alone, and, though Lucy had been restrained by many considerations from asking Sir Thomas' advice on the special question which now occupied her mind, she was still consoled. In case of any break-down he would not blame her; he would give her his sympathy. In case of any difficulty she could write to him, or even summon him to

her aid. He liked her, which was a pleasure to think of—liked her as she liked him—though he was so much older, and of so much more importance in the world. All this was of great comfort to Lucy. She began to hold up her head, and to feel herself less abandoned. It was true he had gone away, but that did not matter so much, he would come back if she wanted his help; and in the meanwhile time was going, floating on noiselessly and swiftly, and by and by the Farafield chapter would be over. Mrs. Ford, who had watched for Sir Tom's departure very jealously, and who had bounced out of the parlour to see him go away, and detected a little redness about Lucy's eyes, was re-assured by hearing her hum little tunes to herself in the latter part of the day, and talk to Jock with great animation about his new tutor, and all that was going to happen.

"She didn't mind after all," Mrs. Ford said, "how should she, a man old enough to be her father." And thus everybody was pleased.

In the afternoon Katie Russell came in, all tearful and penitent, to beg Lucy's pardon, and declare that "it was all me." The pardon was accorded with great willingness and satisfaction, and Katie stayed and chattered, and made a lasting peace. She offended Lucy's taste no longer; or else Lucy awoke to the fact that her friend was never entirely to her taste, and that toleration is the most essential of all qualities to friendship. Katie remained to tea. She told Jock a quite new story, which he had never heard before, and could not parallel out of his books; and she beguiled Lucy back into the old world of careless youth. Lucy's youth had never been so thoughtless or so merry as

that of many of her comrades. Even Katie, though she had known so many of the drawbacks of life, had on the other hand got a great deal more pleasure out of it than the heiress had ever known. Sometimes the pleasures and the pains go together, and it is a question whether those are best off who hold the middle way between, and have not much of either. Katie was a more lively companion than Lucy, with her serious upbringing, her sense of responsibility, and those cares which had been put so prematurely upon her young head, could ever have been. The pink drawing-room, for the first time, became mirthful, and light voices and laughter disturbed the quiet. "Just listen," Mrs. Ford said, "Sir Thomas, for all such a great man as you think him, has not made much impression there." Her husband, who had a very high opinion of the influence of Sir Thomas, uttered a "humph" of protestation from where he sat in his easy-chair by the fireplace. The grate full of shavings was not so pleasant as the grate with a good fire in it was in winter; but it was Ford's place at all seasons. He said nothing but humph! having nothing to add to bolster up his opinion. But it would have been as surprising to him as to his wife had they known that it was he who was in the right, and that even Lucy's laugh, her easier mind, her more cheerful face, owed something to the cheerful presence of Sir Tom, even though he had gone away.

At tea they were joined by another and unexpected visitor, at the sight of whom Mrs. Ford threw up her hands. "Philip!" she cried. "I thought you were abroad. How glad I am to see you! Dear, dear, how little one knows! I was thinking this very afternoon,

when I saw a picture of the snowy mountains—there now, Philip's about there."

"I have come back," said Philip, "I was abroad all last month, but a great many things seemed to call me home. There is a bit to be built on at Kent's Lane. And there was Lucy. Oh, how do you do? You *are* here! I thought," he said with frankness which Mrs. Ford thought excessive, "that I must come back if Lucy was here."

"I shall be here for six months," said Lucy calmly. "I am very glad to see you, Cousin Philip, but it is a pity you should have come back for me."

"I don't regret it," said the young man; he did not resemble any of the others whom Lucy knew. He was not like St. Clair, nor yet Raymond Rushton, who though the one was fat, and the other awkward, had still a certain naturalness and ease, as if they belonged to the position in which they were. Philip was a great deal more carefully adapted to his position in every respect than they were. He had just the clothes which a man in the country in the month of August ought to wear, and he had been absent, spending the first part of his holidays "abroad," as most men in August would like to be. He had all the cleanness and neatness and trimness which are characteristic of a well-bred Englishman. He was not fine; there was no superfluous glitter about him, not a link too much to his watch-chain, not an unnecessary button. In the very best taste! the only thing against him was that his appearance was too complete. He had the air of being respectful of his clothes, and very conscious of them. And he was always on his good behaviour, very careful to commit no solecism, to do exactly what it was right

to do. He came in with his hat in his hand, and clung to it, though all the time it was apparent in his countenance that he would much rather have left it in the hall. It was in such matters that Philip Rainy betrayed himself, for in his heart he felt that it would also have been much more sensible had he hung up his hat, and not encumbered himself with the care of it. He sat down on the haircloth sofa, not approaching his chair to the table round which all the others were seated. He had been brought up upon bread and butter, and was very well accustomed to the homely tea-table; but he felt he owed it to himself to keep up a position of independence, inferring the superior dignity of a late dinner even in vacation time, and a soul above tea.

"Nothing to eat?" said Ford. "I think you're wrong, Philip; here is toast, and there are some nice slices of cold beef; and there's cake, but there's no substance in cake. It is good enough for girls, who live upon nothing, but a man, except to finish off with, wants something more solid. Have a bit of cold beef, that's what I'm taking myself."

"Let him alone," said Mrs. Ford, "he don't want to spoil his dinner. I hope you haven't come home on some wild-goose chase or other, Philip. I hope you have a better reason than just to see Lucy; but, anyhow, you're welcome. Lucy has been home only a few days, and she's not spoiled, nor much changed, though she might be. I cannot say that I think she's much changed."

"Lucy is not one to change," the young man said; and he looked at her with an affectionate smile; but somehow, in the very act of going to her, this look

was arrested by the little saucy face of Katie Russell, a face which was brighter and more mischievous, but not half so strong in moral beauty as that of Lucy. She caught him, looking at him as the most timid of young girls may look at a stranger, when under the care of a most decorous roof and a matron's ample wings. The young man actually swerved a little aside, and stopped dead short in what he was saying. It was as if some one had given him a blow.

"I forgot to introduce you to Miss Russell," said Mrs. Ford, catching the look, but not understanding it. "A cousin of ours, Mr. Rainy, Miss Russell. No, you are right about Lucy; but she has a great many temptations. There are folks about her that have their own ends to serve. She is one that many a person envies; but I, for one, don't envy Lucy. I tell her sometimes I wonder how many of her fine friends would stand by her—My Lady This, and Mrs. That—if she were to lose her money; *that's* what they're after. And she's too trusting, the thing for her would be to keep herself to herself."

"Indeed," cried Katie Russell, with sparkling eyes, "it is very cruel and unkind of you to say so. Lucy knows very well *we* don't love her for her money. What do I care for her money? I was fond of Lucy before I knew what money meant, and so I would be fond of her," cried the girl, with a flush of passion, "if it were all tossed into the sea:—and all my people," she added, after a moment, "as well as me."

Lucy had followed this little outburst with pleasure in her mild eyes, but the last words gave her a shock, as of the real penetrating into the poetical. Her mind

was not quick enough to jump at the subtle mixture of semi-truth and semi-falsehood in it, but she felt, though she could not define. There was the bitterest kind of humour in the suggestion, but Katie, perhaps, did not know, and certainly did not, at the moment, mean anything different from what she said.

"Susan," said Ford, with a nod to Philip, "wasn't meaning anybody in particular. There is no occasion, Miss Russell, to take offence. Mrs. Ford was meaning —other persons that shall be nameless," Ford added, with a wave of his hand.

"They are all wrong, Philip," said Lucy. "I wish so very much people would not speak so. It takes all the pleasure out of my life. Lady Randolph never talked about my money, never warned me against anyone. Please don't do it, Aunt Ford!"

"I know," said Mrs. Ford, putting her handkerchief to her eyes, "I've seen it from the very first in your face, Lucy. I'm not a fine lady, like your Lady Randolph, I can't put a smooth face on everything, and let you go sailing over a precipice as if it were nothing to me. I am only one that speaks out plain what is in my mind, and one that has known you from your cradle, and have no ends of my own, but your interest at heart. But to be plain and true's not enough for you any longer. I've known it all this time, I've seen it in your face: but I didn't think you would put it into words, and before strangers, and me Lucilla Rainy's cousin, and one that has known you from your cradle, and nursed your father on his death-bed; oh, I never thought you could have the heart to put it into words!"

"Have I said anything wrong?" said Lucy, in great distress. She was bewildered by the sudden attack,

and horrified by the scene "before strangers;" for Lucy had all the instincts of respectability, and to see Mrs. Ford's tears filled her with pain and involuntary compunction; but she was not so emotional as to lose her sense of justice. "I did not mean to say anything wrong," she repeated, anxiously. Mrs. Ford's tears were a little slow in coming; she sniffed, and she held her handkerchief to her face, which was red with anger and excitement, but she did not possess, at any time, a great command over tears.

Then Philip took up the part of peace-maker.

"You said yourself, two minutes ago, that Lucy was not changed," he said. "Because you think she should be on her guard, you don't want her to be unhappy? and if she does not like her friends, how can she be happy, Mrs. Ford? so good a friend as you are must know that. To be sure," said Philip, "we of the Rainy family can't help being a little anxious and fussy about our heiress, can we? We think more of her than other people can, and care more for her."

"That is the truth, that is the very truth," cried Mrs. Ford. And thus the incident blew over in professions that Lucy's interest and happiness were all she thought of, on one side, and on the other, that she meant to say nothing which could hurt Mrs. Ford's feelings.

Philip went upstairs with the girls after this, into the pink drawing-room, where he sat all the evening, forgetting his dinner. He had come to see Lucy, but it was Katie Russell who took the conversation in hand; and as he was a very staid young man, not used to the lighter graces of conversation, Katie's chatter, and the perpetual variations of her pretty face, were a sort of

revelation to Philip. He was entirely carried beyond himself and all his purposes by this new being. Lucy sat tranquilly in her corner and assisted, but did little more. She was amused to see her grave cousin laughed at and subdued, and the evening flew over them, as evenings rarely fly, in more edifying intercourse. The talk and the laughter were at their height when Katie, going to the piano to sing "just one more song," suddenly discovered that it was too dark to see her music, and stopped short with a cry of dismay, "Why, it is dark! and I never noticed——What will Mrs. Stone think? I came over only for half an hour, and I am staying all the night. Lucy, goodbye, I must go now."

"But you have promised me this song," Philip said, "there are candles to be had."

"And you are not going to run away like that. Jock and I will go home with you," said Lucy, "and, perhaps, Philip will come too."

Philip thanked his cousin with his eyes, and the song was sung; and then the little party got under weigh. It was a warm still night, with a little autumnal mist softening all the edges of the horizon, and mild stars shining through with a kind yet pensive softness. Philip Rainy had been admirable in all the relations of life. He had done his duty by his parents, by his scholars, and by himself; he had combined a prudent sense of his own interests with justice to everybody, and kindness to those who had a claim upon him; and the life which lay behind him was one on which any well-regulated young man might have looked back with pleasure. But all at once it seemed to the young schoolmaster that it was the dreariest of desert tracks,

and that up to this moment he had never lived at all. He had never understood before what the balmy atmosphere of a summer night meant, or how it was that the stars got soft, and came to bear a personal relation to the eyes that looked at them. What did it mean? He had come to see Lucy; but he barely perceived Lucy. All the world, and all his interests seemed suddenly concentrated into the little circle in which that one little figure was standing. He stood beside her, drawn to her by a soft inexplainable influence. He walked beside her as in a dream; everything was sweet, the night air that lifted her bright hair and tossed it about her forehead; the gorse-bush that clung to her dress, and had to be disengaged, every prickle giving him another delicious prick as he pulled them away. Whether he was dreaming, or whether he had gone clean out of his senses, or whether this was a new life of which he had never been conscious before, Philip did not know. When they arrived at the White House, which they did not do by honest straightforward means, along the plain road that led to it, but by a quite unnecessary roundabout, an excursion led by Jock through all the narrowest byeways, a sudden stop seemed to be put to this chapter of existence. He had a hand put into his for one second, a succession of merry nods, and farewells waved by the same hand, and then he stood with Lucy, come to himself, outside a blank door, a dropped curtain, a sudden conclusion. Philip stood gazing, he did not seem to have any energy even to turn round. Had it been suggested to him to lie down there and spend the night, he would have thought the suggestion most reasonable. Had he been alone, he would, no doubt, have lingered, for some

time at least. Even as it was, he never knew how long a time, a minute, or an hour, or perhaps only an infinitesimal moment, too small to be reckoned on any watch, elapsed, before, slowly coming to himself with the giddiness of a fall, he saw that he was with Lucy, and that she was turning to go home. Jock was roaming on in advance, a little moving solid speck in the vague dark, and Lucy moved on, softly and lightly indeed, but with no enchantment about her steps. And then what she said was all of the old world, the antiquated dried-up Sahara of existence from which Philip had escaped for the first time in his life.

"It looks a little like rain," Lucy said, "it is a good thing we are not far from home."

"Ah! but it does not so much matter now," Philip said with a sigh. "She would have spoilt her pretty dress."

"Yes! muslins go at once," said Lucy, "it is the starch. I didn't think it would rain when we came out. But we must not grumble—we have had a beautiful summer. Does Farafield seem just the same to you, Philip, when you come home?"

"Farafield! I never saw anything so sweet—the air is softer than I ever felt it in my life; and the Common smells—like Paradise," cried the young man in the sudden bewilderment which had come upon him, which he did not understand.

"Do you think so?" said Lucy in great surprise; especially the last point was doubtful; but she thought it was the warmth of local enthusiasm, and blamed herself for her want of patriotism. "I like it very well," she added with hesitation, "but—*after* one has been

away the first time, then one sees all the difference. I don't suppose I should feel the same again."

Then there was a pause. Philip did not feel inclined to talk; his mind was quite abstracted out of its ordinary channel. As they went back, he felt within himself a dual consciousness—he was walking with *her*, helping her over the stones, disengaging her dress from the prickles; and at the same time he was walking demurely with Lucy, who required no such services. The sensible young schoolmaster, had the question been suddenly put to him, could not, at the moment, have distinguished which was true.

But Lucy, curiously enough, was seized with an inclination to open her mind to her cousin. She had come back to her natural condition, through the help of Sir Tom and Katie, and she wanted to be friendly. She said, "I am so glad that you have come home, Philip. You know—so much more than Aunt Ford knows. Perhaps if you will tell her that everybody is not thinking of my money—that it is not half so important as she thinks, she will believe you."

"Your money!" Philip said with a gasp—suddenly the stars disappeared out of the sky. The summer evening became less balmy. There was a moment of rapid gyration, either of the whole round world itself, or of his head, he could not tell which. And he felt himself strike sharply with his foot upon a stone in the path, and came to earth and to common life again, limping and rubbing his ancle. "Confound it!" he said under his breath; but, perhaps, it was his good angel put that stone in his way. He came wholly and entirely to himself under the stimulant of that salutary pain.

"I hope you have not hurt yourself," said Lucy, with her usual calm.

"Oh! it is nothing," said Philip, ashamed, "The fact is I came home sooner than I intended, thinking —that, perhaps, you might want some advice. For instance," he said, grasping at the first idea which occurred to him, a sort of staff of the practical in this chaos of the vague and unknown where he had suddenly found himself stumbling, "about Jock—he is in my way—I might help you about Jock."

"Oh!" said Lucy with animation, "thank you, Philip, that is all arranged. I have got the most delightful plan settled. Mrs. Stone's nephew, a poor gentleman who is in bad health: just when he was about succeeding so finely at the bar—and it is a great thing to succeed at the bar, isn't it? his health gave way: and he is so good as to be willing to come and teach Jock. I think it is so very kind."

"Kind!" said Philip at last, thoroughly woke up. He opened his eyes wide and shook himself instinctively. This was what Mrs. Ford meant, and no wonder if she made a scene. "This is a strange step to take, Lucy," he said seriously. "I don't know what it means. I should think as a relative, and your father's successor, and—engaged in tuiton" (nature had brought the word schoolmaster to his lips, but unless you belong to the higher branches of the profession, you do not like to call yourself a schoolmaster), "that I had the first claim."

Lucy was greatly distressed. She had never considered the question before in this light. "Oh, Philip! I am so sorry. So you should have had—if I had ever thought! I beg your pardon a thousand times.

But then," she added, recovering her composure, "you have a great many boys—it does not matter to you; and this poor gentleman—"

"Poor gentlemen ought not to come to you," said Philip with indignation. "A barrister, a man in bad health—what was he to do with a small boy? Jock ought to have come to me. I proposed it before you went to London, it is the best thing for him. I think —that your father meant him to be my successor in Kent's Lane."

"Oh, no, no! never that," said Lucy.

"Is it so much beneath Jock?" Philip said, with a touch of natural bitterness. "But anyhow, it is I that ought to have the charge of him. I do not want to be unkind, Lucy; but I think I begin to see what Mrs. Ford means about your family."

"Philip!" cried Lucy indignant, and then she added, almost crying, "you are all so unjust; and if you say so too, what am I to do?"

"I will not say anything; but it is what I cannot help thinking," said Philip with the stateliness of offence. It seemed to him, he could scarcely tell how, that he was being defrauded, not of Jock, who was a trifle, but of all share or interest in Lucy's future. He had come back, on purpose to look after her, to keep her out of trouble. While he had been away, it had been more and more clear to him that to share Lucy's fortune was in a manner his right. It would save him, at least, ten years, it would secure his position at once —and he had a right. He had come to the Terrace that evening full of this idea; and he had played the fool—he could not but allow that he had played the fool. What were poetry and the stars and the mild

influences of the Pleiades to him? He was a Rainy, and there was no one who had so much right to share the great Rainy fortune. The energy of opposition awoke him, which nothing else, perhaps, could have done. "You will forgive me," he said, "but you are only a young girl, and you cannot be expected to understand. And it is quite true what Aunt Ford said, there are always a herd of harpies after a girl with a large fortune. You should take the advice of those who belong to you. You should first consult your true friends."

Lucy was confounded, she did not know how to reply. Was not Sir Thomas her true friend? He had not been angry with her when she told him about that famous scheme for giving the money back. Some floating idea that Philip would have been able to help her in that respect, that he might have suggested what, for instance, she should give to St. Clair, had been in her mind. But Lucy promptly shut up her impulse of confession. She withdrew a little from his side. He was not ignorant like the Fords—he was a kind of natural adviser. "But what is the use of speaking to anyone who does not understand?" Lucy said. So they traversed the rest of the way in silence, Philip occasionally making a severe remark in the same vein, yet feeling, as he did so, that every word he said was a sacrifice of his vantage ground. He wanted to change his tactics, when he saw the evident mistake of strategy he had made. But such matters are not within our own control; when a false key is struck, it is not easy to get free of it. Philip was ready to curse himself for his folly; but at the same time his folly and his wrong key-note, and the misadventure of the

evening altogether gave him a sense of almost aversion to his cousin. "What a contrast!" he said to himself. Thus Lucy, whose simplicity was captivating to such a man of the world as Sir Tom, made the Farafield schoolmaster indignant and impatient beyond measure. Sir Thomas would have been in no sort of danger from little Katie. Thus the world goes on, without any regard to the suitable, or possible. They said "goodnight" very coolly to each other, and Lucy ran upstairs vexed and troubled—for to be disapproved of wounded her. As for Mrs. Ford, she came out of the parlour, where she now seemed to lie in wait for occurrences, when she heard them come to the door. "Come soon again, Philip," she whispered, "there's a good lad. I think the whole town is after her. You are the one that ought to get it all. You will be kindly welcome if you come every day."

"I have not a notion what it is you want me to get," said Philip crossly as he strode away.

CHAPTER IX.

VISITORS.

THE day on which these events occurred was the day of Mr. Frank St. Clair's arrival at the White House, where he had come dutifully in answer to his aunt's summons, to hear of "something to his advantage." To do him justice, he was by no means delighted with the project; but he was dutiful and needy, and there was nothing for it but to submit. He went the next morning to pay his respects to the heiress, and assume the charge of his pupil. It was

not a long walk from the White House, but Mr. Frank St. Clair was warm when he arrived, being, according to the euphemism of the day, "out of training," and glad to sit down and contemplate the little fellow who was to be the instrument of his fortune. Jock, who had resumed his position on the white rug, and lay there, cool and at his ease, while Lucy dutifully read her history, was by no means inclined to submit to any examination.

"Come and tell me what you can do, my little man," Mr. St. Clair said; "let us see which of us knows the most; we are going to teach other—you me, or I you. Come and let's make out which it is to be."

Jock raised his head from the rug, and looked at his questioner with big eyes. The inspection did not seem to please him. "I know a lot," he said, conscisely, and dropped his head; his book was more interesting than the stranger. It was "Don Quixote" with pictures which he had in his hands, this deeply experienced reader had never encountered the work with these attractions before.

"I told you, Miss Trevor," said St. Clair, "he sees through me, he knows my learning is antiquated. If a man has the misfortune to live before Madvig what is he to do? Scholarship is the most progressive of all sciences; which is curious, considering that it is with dead languages it has to do."

Lucy raised her mild eyes with no understanding in them. It was in vain to speak of dead languages to her. "Though he is so little," she said, apologetically, "he has read a great many books. That is what he means; but he has had no education, Mr. St. Clair, except just a little at Hampstead. He has done no-

thing but read books—nonsense books," said Lucy, severely, thinking to reach the culprit, "that could not teach him anything or do him any good."

"Reading books is on the whole not a bad kind of education," said St. Clair. "I see you pursue that way yourself."

"Oh—but this is history: it is not in the least amusing, sometimes it is very hard, I can't remember it a bit: and sometimes I almost go to sleep; very different," said Lucy, pointedly, "from the books that Jock reads; they make him laugh, they make him so interested that he can't bear anyone to speak to him. He won't go to bed, he won't play for them. *That* cannot be education at all."

"Very true," Mr. St. Clair said. "Medicine must be nasty. Might one know, my friend, what you are reading now?"

Jock raised himself from the rug once more. He did not lose a word either of the book or the conversation. "I've read it before; but this time I've just come to the windmills," he said.

"The windmills? now what may they be?"

"I told you," said Lucy regretfully; "they are all nonsense books—nothing that is of any good."

"Because you don't know," cried Jock, hotly. "You've no business to speak when you don't know. *He* doesn't think they're windmills; he thinks they're big giants, and they're just like it, just like giants—I've thought so myself. He thinks they've got a lot of poor people carrying them off to be slaves, and there's only *him* upon his own horse—nobody more; but do you think he'll let them carry off the poor people for slaves? He goes at them like a dozen knights—he goes

at them like an army," cried Jock, his eyes flashing. "I wish I had been there, I'd have done it too."

"Ah, Don Quixote," said St. Clair. "What you, Jock! you that know such a lot, you'd have gone at the windmills too?"

Jock grew red, for he did not like ridicule. "He didn't know they were windmills," he said.

"Didn't I tell you, Mr. St. Clair," said Lucy; "that is all he thinks about—windmills! what good can windmills do him? unless he were to learn all about the uses of them, and who began them, and the good they are to the country; that would be very different from a fairy tale."

"It is not a bit a fairy tale," Jock cried, indignant. "It's a long time since I read any fairy tales—never any since Prospero and Ariel on the enchanted island. This is about a man. Fairy tales are very nice when you are quite little," he added, with dignity, "just beginning to read plain; but when you are bigger you like sense best, for you can think I would do the same."

"You see, Mr. St. Clair, that is just like him; it is not education," said Lucy, with mild despair.

"I am not quite clear about that," said St. Clair, who knew a little more than Lucy; "but, Jock, you will find a great many more books to read, and men to hear about, if you come to me and learn. Leave your tall gentleman to overcome the windmills, and come and speak to me. Tell me what you have learnt," he said, holding the child within his arm as he stood up, reluctantly, by his side. Lucy looked on with pleased approval, yet many excuses. "He has never been to school, he was so delicate, papa didn't like

him to be out of his sight," she said, reddening with much shame and self-reproach, as the real state of the case was elucidated. When the cross-examination was over, Jock, though not at all ashamed, escaped as quickly as he could from Mr. St. Clair's detaining arm. He snatched up his book from the rug, and made assurance sure by putting a flight of stairs and the closed door of Mrs. Ford's room between him and the inquisitor, who laughed and shook his head as the little fellow bolted. "We must begin from the beginning, I fear;" he said. "He has been neglected; but after all there has not been much time lost."

"I am very sorry he is so ignorant," said Lucy, deprecating; "but, Mr. St. Clair, papa was old, and I was very young."

"Yes, no one could expect you to think of it; you are very young now, Miss Trevor, to have such a charge."

"Oh, that is nothing," Lucy said; "many people have had a great deal more to do. I have heard of girls that have had to work for their brothers and sisters, indeed I have been acquainted with some," she said, thinking of Mary Russell. "But, now that we know of it, it is not too late to mend it, Mr. St. Clair."

"Not at all too late," he was pleased that she should say we. Such a familiarity of association was all he thought that could be desired. "I will undertake to put him in the right way—for the moment."

"Oh!" Lucy said, with disturbed looks, "will it be only for the moment, Mr. St. Clair? I know it is very good fortune, far more than we could have expected, to get you at all—and that you should take such a very little boy."

"I am very happy to be able to be of any use to you," St. Clair said, with a smile, "and if I am not called away—But you well understand that I cannot be at all sure of my time, Miss Trevor. I may be called away."

St. Clair was ready to laugh at the little formula, and this gave him an additional air of seriousness, which looked like feeling. "I wish I had done nothing in my life to be so little ashamed of," he added, "as teaching a small boy."

Lucy looked at him with great respect, and even a little awe. An innocent girl has a certain awe of a man so much older than herself, so much more experienced in every way, who perhaps has had mysterious wrong-doings in his life as well as other things, more momentous and terrible than any her imagination has ever realized. The things that St. Clair might have to be ashamed of loomed large upon her in the darkness of her ignorance, like gigantic shadows, upon which she looked with pity and a little horror, yet at the same time an awful respect. "Mrs. Stone told me," she said, with her serious face, "that you had not been well, that, after all your studies and work, you had not been well enough—I am very, very sorry. It must have been a great disappointment."

"That is exactly what it was; it is very sweet to meet with some one who understands," St. Clair said; "yes, it is not so much for myself, but they had all done so much for me, all believed in me so."

"But, Mr. St. Clair, with rest and taking care, will it not all come right?"

"They say so," he said; "but, Miss Trevor, though you don't know much of the hardships of life, you will

understand that this is exactly what it is most hard to do. To rest implies means and leisure, and I ought to be working night and day."

"I am very, very sorry," said Lucy; a great many waves of varying resolution were passing over her mind —what could she do? would it be most polite to take no notice, to receive such a confidence as if it was nothing to her? or should she be bold and put forth her powers as a helper, a wrong-redresser? Jock's story about the windmills had seemed very great nonsense to his unlettered sister, yet practically she was in a strait not dissimilar. She put her lance in rest with a very doubtful and unassured hand; but if they were giants, as they seemed, she too felt, like the great Spaniard, that to pass them by would be cowardly. She looked at him wistfully, faltering. "You will think it strange of me to say it," she said, her serious face gradually crimsoning from chin to forehead; "but perhaps you know—that I am—not the same as other girls; if there were anything that I could do—"

St. Clair grew red, too, with surprise and mortification: what could the girl mean? he asked himself; but he answered suavely, "I am sure you are a great deal better and kinder than most girls—or men either, Miss Trevor. You have the divine gift of sympathy, which always does one good."

"I don't know if it is sympathy, Mr. St. Clair. Papa left me a great many directions. He said there were some things I was to try to do; and if it would be good for you to have leisure, and be able to rest for a year or two—"

St. Clair was reduced to the level of Raymond

Rushton by the utter confusion which these words seemed to bring into the very atmosphere.

"Oh, by Jove!" he ejaculated faintly, in his dismay. He rose up hurriedly. She would offer him money, he felt, if he gave her another moment to do it, and though he was very willing and desirous, it he could, to get possession of her money as a whole, to have a little of it thus offered to him seemed the last indignity. "I expect to find Jock a very amusing pupil," he said, "not at all like the average little boy. He shall give me a lesson in literature, when I have given him his Latin. I suspect it is I who will profit the most. The little wretch seems to have read everything; I wonder if you have shared his studies. He must have got the taste from some one, it is not generally innate in small boys."

"Oh, no," said Lucy, "not I." She was disappointed to have the subject changed so rapidly, and abandoned it with great reluctance, still looking at him to know why he should so cut her short. "Jock does not think much of me," she added, "and all those story-books, and plays, and poetry, cannot be good for him, surely. Papa never minded; he was old, and Jock seemed such a baby, it did not seem to matter what he did; it was not his fault."

"Oh, I don't think it was anybody's fault. But you are reading, I see, in a steadier way. What is it? history?" Mr. St. Clair approached her table where she was sitting and looked at Lucy's book.

"Yes," she said, with a soft little sigh. "Lady Randolph thought I ought; and I should be thinking of my French. It is so hard when one is not clever.

I must ask Mrs. Stone to let me go to Mademoiselle when she comes back."

"And may I help you with this?" Mr. St. Clair said. He drew a chair near her and sat down.

It had not occurred to good Mrs. Ford that any precautions were necessary, or that she should break up her mornings by being present during all the talk of the young people. If a girl had to be watched for ever, Mrs. Ford thought, she must be a very poor sort of girl; so that Lucy's pink drawing-room was practically open to the world, as entirely open as if she had been an American young lady, with a salon and visiting list of her own. She was very grateful to Mr. St. Clair when he sat down beside her. It was so kind. He took up the book, and asked her if she had seen this and that, other books more readable than the dry compendium Lucy was studying.

"If you will let me get them for you, it will give me the greatest pleasure," St. Clair said. "I consider history my great subject. I should like to help you, if you will let me." Lucy accepted his offer with the greatest gratitude. She had found it very dry work by herself.

This was the scene upon which Raymond Rushton came in, very slowly, crushing his hat in his hands. His mother had prevented him from signifying the hour of his visit, with a natural fear of the precautions which Mrs. Stone would certainly have taken to occupy the ground beforehand; but this prudence, as it happened, did him no good. Raymond, to tell the truth, was as much relieved as he was annoyed by St. Clair's presence. He had felt himself grow red and grow pale, hot and cold, all the way, as he came

the street, wondering how he was to manage to make himself agreeable as his mother had ordered him. The very fact that he was commanded to make himself agreeable, hindered any natural effort he might have been capable of. He did not know how to talk to Lucy. Some girls saved you the trouble of talking, but she was not one of those girls, and he did not know how he was to manage to get upon such easy terms with her as would make flirtation possible—even if he had known how to flirt, which he did not—at least with Lucy. So, though he was so far sensible of the importance of the pursuit as to be slightly angry and alarmed by St. Clair's presence, he was still more relieved, on the whole, to feel that he was thus protected, and that there would not be so much required of him. He came in, looking very much embarrassed, crushing his hat between his hands.

"How d'ye do, Miss Trevor?" he said. "My mother thought I ought to come and see about our ride. We have fixed Thursday for the picnic, but don't you think we might go out to-morrow to see how the horses go together? Mine," said Raymond, with a blush, "is rather an old screw."

"I should like to go—whenever you like. I am very fond of it," said Lucy. "Jock and I thought of going a little way this evening, but only a little way."

This put Raymond more and more out.

"I am afraid I can't get my horse to-day. It is too late now to arrange it."

"Do you get your horses from the 'Black Bull?'" said St. Clair. "It must be difficult to make sure of any thing there. I got to the 'Cross Keys,' where you are much better served. [illegible] Bull,'" he added,

in an explanatory tone, "is the place where you get your flys, Miss Trevor. When the fine weather comes, and a great many people are driving about, all their horses are put into requisition."

"Oh, not quite so bad as that," cried Raymond, reddening, "you don't suppose I ride a fly-horse."

"I know I have done it," St. Clair said, "when one has not a horse of one's own, one has to be content with what one can get; but to feel that you are upon a noble steed, which made his last appearance, perhaps, between the shafts of a hearse——"

"Oh, hold hard!" Raymond cried; he was sadly humiliated by the suggestion, and he now began to feel that the presence of this intruder made his visit of very little use indeed, "you must not take all that for gospel, Miss Trevor. A joke is a joke, but a man may go too far in joking."

"Which is more than you are likely to do on old Fryer's horses," St. Clair said, laughing. But then he got up, feeling that he had made an end of his young rival. He was bigger, broader, altogether more imposing than Raymond. He stood up, and expanded his large proportions, feeling that anybody with half an eye must see the difference—which, perhaps, on the whole, was an unwise step; for St. Clair was too much developed for a young man, and the merest suspicion of fatness, is not that a capital crime in a girl's eyes? On the whole, when they stood up together, Raymond's slim youthfulness carried the day; but there are no delusions so obstinate as those which concern our own personal appearance, and it was with a smile of conscious triumph that the larger young man spread him-

self out. As for Raymond, he too felt outdone, and withdrew a little from the competition.

"Emmie has got her pony," he said. "My mother thinks it will do her a great deal of good to see how you ride, Miss Trevor."

"Oh! but I never was considered to ride very well," Lucy said.

"We think down here that whatever you do is done well," said St. Clair, taking the very words out of Raymond's mouth, with this difference, that Ray would have uttered them seriously, and would have broke down, whereas *that* fellow made a joke of it, and carried off the compliment with a laugh. "We are not much used to accomplished young ladies from town down here," St. Clair added, "and whatever you do is a wonder to us. 'When you speak we'd have you do so ever—when you sing, we'd have you buy and sell so, so give alms—'"

From this it will be seen that Mr. Frank St. Clair was possessed of some of the graces of letters. But the young persons on either side of him opened their eyes. Ray had a suspicion that there was some sort of play-acting in it; but Lucy was simply amazed that anyone should speak of her singing when she could not sing at all.

"Indeed," she said seriously, "I do not know a note. I never had a voice, and what was the use of having lessons?" which simple answer, though it made him laugh, entirely disconcerted St. Clair and reduced him almost to the level of Raymond, who had now got one hand into his pocket, and felt more comfortable and at his ease. It was thus that Ray was left master

of the field, somewhat to his own surprise; but at the same time much to his gratification too.

"I say, what a queer fellow that is," Raymond said, "we all want to know about him. If he's a barrister, as they say, why isn't he at his chambers, or on circuit, or something? To be sure it's the 'Long' just now; but he seems to be always here."

"He has overworked himself, he is not able to do anything," said Lucy with great sympathy, looking out from the window with a grave face as he went out through the big gateway and crossed the road. When he had reached the edge of the Common, he looked back, and seeing her, took off his hat. It gave St. Clair a glow of gratification to see Lucy looking after him. He went on with a lighter step, and, if possible, a broader chest than ever.

"By Jove! isn't he fat?" said Raymond by Lucy's side; and Lucy, full of sympathy as she was, could not help remarking the breadth of shadow which moved with him across the sunshine. She laughed in spite of herself. The observation was not witty, but Raymond was put into such high spirits by the laugh he elicited that he burst forth into scintillations of still more unquestionable wit. "That is because they pet him so at Mrs. Stone's. Ladies always do pet one. I should like to know where he'd find a fly horse up to his weight. Let us ask him to the picnic, Miss Trevor; and borrow a beast for him from the brewer. One elephant upon another," said Ray.

But Lucy's amusement did not last through so long an address. She ended by a sigh, looking after him sympathetically. "I wish one could do everything one wished," she said.

"Ah!" Raymond echoed with a sigh. "But you can, I should think, pretty near. I wish I could do any one thing I wished," the young man added ruefully.

"And that is just my case too," Lucy said.

CHAPTER X.

A CROQUET PARTY.

THE Rushtons lived in a big old red brick house, close to the town-hall in what was still called the market-place of Farafield, though all the meaner hubbub of the market had long ago been banished to the square behind with its appropriate buildings. It was a house of the time of Queen Anne, with rows of glittering windows, surmounted by a pediment, and, though it was in the centre of the town, a fine old walled garden behind. To Lucy this garden seemed the brightest place imaginable, when she was led into it through the shady passages of the old house, the thick walls and rambling arrangement of which defended it from the blazing of the August skies which penetrated with pitiless heat and glare the naked walls of the Terrace, built without any consideration of atmospheric changes. Mrs. Rushton's drawing-room was green and cool, all the venetian blinds carefully closed on one side, and on the other, looking out upon the trees and shady lawn where two or three young people, girls in light dresses and young men scarcely less summer-like in costume, were playing croquet. These were the days when croquet still reigned on all lawns and country places, and nobody had as yet discovered that it was

"slow." The party was of the usual orthodox kind. There was a young, a very young curate in a long black coat and wide-awake, and a second young man in light clothes with his hands in his pockets, whom Lucy's inexperienced eyes with difficulty distinguished from Raymond Rushton; and two or three girls, one of them the daughter of the house, Emma, a shy hoyden of sixteen. All these young people looked with great curiosity at Lucy as she followed Mrs. Rushton out of the house in her black frock, Jock clinging closely to her. Jock, though he had a great deal of self-possession on ordinary occasions, was shy in such an unusual emergency as this. He had never been at a garden-party, he was not used to society, and he did not know how to play croquet, in all which points Lucy was almost as uninstructed as he. There was a tea-table set out under an old mulberry tree, with garden chairs and rugs spread out upon the grass. Nothing could be more pleasant, cool, leisurely, and comfortable. It was indeed a scene such as might be seen on a summer afternoon in almost every garden with a good sized house attached to it, with a lawn and a mulberry tree, throughout England. But then Lucy was not much acquainted with such places, and to her everything was new. They all stood and looked at her as she followed Mrs. Rushton across the grass —looked at her with inward sighs and wonderings. To think she should be so rich, while none of the others had anything to speak of. It did not perhaps go so far as actual envy; but it was certainly surprise, and a bewildered question why such good fortune should have fallen to an inconsiderable girl, and not at all to the others wo might have been supposed able

to make so much more use of it. The young men could not help feeling that the enjoyment which they could have extracted out of so much money would have been far more than anything a girl could derive from it. Not one of the three perhaps went any further, or at least went so far as to ask whether there were any means by which he could appropriate such a fortune, except indeed Raymond, who was in a most uncomfortable state, knowing that his mother intended him to begin at once to "pay attention" to Lucy, and not knowing in the least how to begin. Lucy was put into the most comfortable chair as if she had been a dowager, and even Jock was wooed as he had never been wooed before.

"Oh, you will soon learn how to play," all the young people said in a chorus, "it is very easy."

Lucy thought they were all very kind, and she thought the lawn a kind of little paradise with all the sights and sounds of the ruder world shut out.

"Emmie and I almost live here," Mrs. Rushton said. "We bring out our work in the morning; you can't think how pleasant it is. I wish, my dear Lucy, that it could have been arranged that you should live with your guardian instead of those good relations of yours. They are very nice, but it is always more cheerful where there are young people. I wish it could be managed. The Fords are excellent people, but they are in a different rank of society. I was speaking to Mr. Rushton about it, but he does not seem to think anything can be done; men are so entirely without resources. You may depend upon it I should find some way in which it could be done, if it depended on me."

"I don't think it could be done, Mrs. Rushton; it is all very exact in the will."

"Then I suppose you stand up very firmly by the will—in every particular, my dear?" Mrs. Rushton said, with a significant look.

"How could I help it?" said Lucy. She preferred looking at the croquet to discussing the will, and she wished Raymond would go and play and not stand by her chair, looming over her. His mother looked at him from time to time, and when these appeals were made he took his hands out of his pockets and grew red, and cleared his throat. But nothing ever came of it. Lucy did not know what to say to this embarrassed young man; he seemed so much further off from her, by being so much nearer than Sir Tom. At length she asked, with some diffidence, "Are you not going to play?"

"Oh! my mother thought you would like—to walk round the garden."

"You goose!" cried his mother. "The fact is, Lucy, Ray thought you would like to see all the old-fashioned corners. They are not like the gardens at the Hall. Oh! we don't pretend to anything so fine; but we have heaps of flowers, and I think that is the chief thing. Ray is devoted to the garden—he wants so much to show you round."

And a few minutes after Lucy found herself walking by Ray, who was very shy, and had not a notion what to say to her, nor had she what to say to him. He took her along a commonplace path, and showed her the flower-beds, that is to say he intimated, with a wave of his hand and a blush, that here were the

roses, and there—"I'm sure I don't know what you call these things," Ray said.

"Are you not very fond of flowers, then? I thought Mrs. Rushton—"

"Oh yes, I'm very fond of them—some, you know; but I never can remember the names; it is like songs, I'm very fond of music; but I never can remember the words."

This was a long speech, and he felt better after it. However little inclined you may feel to do your duty, there is a sense of satisfaction in having done it. "Do you sing?" he added, emboldened by his own success.

"No," Lucy said; and then the poor young fellow was balked, and the path which seemed to be opening before him was cut suddenly short. He gave a sigh of disappointment, and plunged his hands deeper than ever into his pockets to seek inspiration there.

"Mamma thinks we should go out to-morrow," he said.

"Yes?" This monosyllable was interrogative, and gave him encouragement. He cleared his throat again.

"I could show you some very nice rides—the way to the picnic on Thursday, is very pretty. Were you ever at the old abbey at Burnside? Quantities of people go—"

"I have passed it," said Lucy; "when we rode at school."

"Oh! did you ride at school? I don't think that could be much fun—all girls. Picnics are not very much fun either."

"I never saw one. I should think it would be nice," said Lucy, with some doubt.

"Oh well, perhaps if you were never at one before —I daresay it will be nice when—when *you* are there, Miss Trevor," said Ray, growing very red; "but then you see I never went with you before."

Lucy looked at him with some surprise, totally unable to divine why he should flourish so wildly the croquet-mallet he was carrying, and blush and stammer so much. She was entirely unaware that she had assisted at the production of Raymond's first compliment. She took it very quietly, not knowing its importance.

"My mother thinks Emmie can ride," he went on, after a confused pause; "but she can't a bit. Some girls are famous—take fences, and everything you can put before them. There are the Morton girls—I suppose you know the Mortons?"

"I don't know anyone—except the girls who were at school."

"Oh, there were some great swells, were there not," said Raymond, "at that school?"

Perhaps, for the first time, Lucy felt a little pleasure in repeating the names of her school-fellows, information which Raymond received with awe.

"That's a cut above us," he said, "they were all awfully angry at home because the old ladies wouldn't have Emmie. I suppose you were different."

"It was because of my having so much money," said Lucy, calmly. "Oh, but you need not laugh. Mrs. Stone said a girl with a great deal of money wanted more training."

"I can't see that," cried Raymond; "not a bit. It doesn't take much education to spend a great fortune, when a fellow has to make his own way like me; I

should think there was nothing so jolly as to have a lot of money, so much that you never could get through it; by Jove! I wonder how it feels," he said, with a laugh.

To this question, if it was a question, Lucy made no reply. It was the subject upon which she could talk best; but she was not a great talker, and Raymond was a kind of being very far off from her, whom she did not understand.

"I don't think there is much more to see," he said, "there is not much. I can't think what my mother meant to show you the garden. Would you like to go back and try a game? I'll teach you if you like. I suppose I may say you will ride to the picnic? Emmie will go (as well as she knows how), and I——"

"If Jock may come too."

"Oh!" cried Raymond, "there will be no want of chaperons, you know. My mother is coming, and no doubt some more old ladies. It will be all right, you know," said the youth with a laugh. This speech made Lucy ponder, but confused her mind rather than enlightened it. She went back to the lawn with him into the midst of the croquet players, with very little more conversation, and Mrs. Rushton looking on anxiously, gnashed her teeth behind the tea-urn. "He did not seem to me to find a word to say to her," she lamented afterwards; "what is the good of spending all that money on a boy's education if at the end of it he can't say a word for himself." And her husband answered with those comforting words which husbands have the secret of. "You had much better let scheming alone," he said. "You will put me in a false position if you don't mind, and you'll never do

any good to yourself." We are ashamed to say the monosyllable was "Stuff!" which Mrs. Rushton replied.

But the afternoon was very pleasant to Lucy; and Jock enjoyed it too, after a while, learning the game much more quickly than his sister, and getting into an excitement about it which she did not share. The little fellow remained in the foreground brandishing a mallet long after the party had melted away—and took possession of the lawn altogether, tyrannising over the little Rushtons, when Lucy was taken in to dinner with the grown-up members of the family. "Mrs. Rushton says you may come with me, Jock," Lucy said, but Jock resisted strenuously. "It is only when you go we can have a real game; you are all duffers," said the little boy with a contempt which he was much in the habit of showing to his sister. Thus they were launched upon life and society in Farafield. Mrs. Rushton proposed the brougham to Lucy when the time came to go home, but, on hearing that she would prefer to walk, declared that she too was dying for a little fresh air, and that the cool of the evening was delightful. Then they sallied forth in a body, Raymond by Lucy's side. It was all very pleasant. He was not a brilliant talker indeed, but Lucy did not want anything very brilliant, and what with the little pricks and stimulants provided by his mother, who walked behind, Raymond excelled himself. It was cheerful even to see the little party making its way along the cool twilight ways, with soft interchange of voices and laughter, little Jock again holding his sister's hand, while Raymond was skilfully poked and bantered into talk. If it was a scheme it was not very deeply laid, and meant

nothing cruel. Would not Raymond Rushton be a perfectly good match for her, should it come to pass? and why should not Raymond have the great fortune as well as another? His mother felt all the glow of virtuous consciousness in her breast. He was a good son, and would make a good husband. In every way, even in respect to family and position, old Trevor's daughter in marrying Raymond would do very well for herself.

CHAPTER XI.

POPULARITY.

LUCY found the picnic very amusing. She had never known any of the delights of society; and the gay party in the Abbey ruins, and the ride—though Emmy did not know in the least how to sit her pony, and Raymond rode a tall and gaunt animal of extremely doubtful race, which might have drawn a fly, or a hearse, for anything his appearance said to the contrary—was pleasant all the same. The party was not very large, but it included the best people in Farafield, and among others, the Rector and his family, who were all very gracious to Lucy. "You must not forget that I am partially your guardian," the Rector said. "If you flirt I have a right to pull you up. If you distinguish one young fellow more than another, I shall probably ask what are your intentions? So beware," he cried, laughing and holding up a finger of warning. And all the Rectory girls were as friendly as if they had possessed a brother, which unfortunately was not the case. "If there had been a boy among

us, of course he should have tried for the prize," they all said with cheerful frankness, which Mrs. Rushton did not relish.

Lucy, however, had a guardian who was more alarming than the Rector. Out of civility to her, Philip had been asked, and Philip conducted himself in a way which called forth the dire displeasure of all who had any intentions upon Lucy's peace. He was always appearing wherever she went, stalking continually across the scene, like a villain in the theatre, appearing suddenly when least expected. "What was the fellow afraid of?" the Rector said, "he had no chance; he was not even in the running." But he was Lucy's cousin, and in this capacity he was privileged to push forward, to make his way through a group, to call to her familiarly to "come and see" something, or even to persuade her that the thing she was invited to do on the other hand was impossible. "You can't go there, Lucy, the mud would be up to your knees, come this way and I'll show you all you want," or, "You never will be able for that climb, I will show you an easier way." Thus Philip, who had been so irreproachable and popular, made himself disagreeable in society for the first time. Perhaps the chief cause of it was that Katie was there. He had taken himself sharply to task after that one evening of enchantment, which was so new and so unusual that he had given way to it without an effort. The more delicious it was, the more Philip had taken himself to task. He tried to analyse it, and make out how it was that he had been so deeply affected. A reasonable man, he said to himself, must be able to give an account of all the mental processes he passed through;

but here was a mental process which was inexplicable. Every interest, every argument pointed to Lucy as the object of his thoughts. And now that he saw Lucy among other people, and observed the court that was paid to her, it became intolerable to Philip to think of a stranger who had nothing to do with the family, carrying her off and her fortune, which belonged to the Rainys. He could not think of such a thing with composure. For himself he liked Lucy well enough, and probably the most suitable arrangement in the circumstances for both of them, would have been the *mariage de convenance*, which is not allowed as a natural expedient in England, in name at least. But when he remembered the evening at the Terrace, when he had been so foolish, Philip could not understand himself. On various occasions he had attempted to analyse it—what was it? Lucy had blue eyes as well as Katie Russell, she was about the same height. To be sure her hair did not curl, and during the course of his analysis, he recollected with dangerous distinctness the blowing out of the curls in the soft evening breeze. But who could analyse a curl, or understand how such an insignificant detail could give softness to the air, and melody to the wind, and make the very stars in heaven look their best? One of the Rector's daughters had a great many curls, far more complete articles than the curls of Katie, but they did not produce the same effect.

After this unsuccessful attempt at analysis, Philip kept himself away from Katie, and kept watch upon his cousin. He was determined to appropriate the one, and, if he could help, not so much as to see the other. It was the easiest way. But these two objects

together made the picnic a very harassing and painful pleasure to the young schoolmaster. When Raymond Rushton was pushed by his mother's exertions to Lucy's side, Philip did not fail to do his best to hustle him politely away. He was constantly at hand with an appeal to Lucy, Lucy. At least he was determined that everybody should see he had a claim upon her, and a prior claim to all the rest of the world. But still he could not but remain conscious of the presence of the other girl. In all the guarded and careful intercourse which he had previously had with society in Farafield, as a man on his promotion, and anxiously attentive to rules, Philip had never asserted himself, never put himself into undue prominence, never presumed upon the kindness of the friends who were at the same time his patrons, before. But it could not be denied that he made himself disagreeable about Lucy that afternoon; her name was continually on his lips. He would let her have no rest. He stepped in front of everybody, broke up all the groups of which she formed a part, and followed her with vigilant watch everywhere. Had his relationship to the heiress turned his head—or was it possible that he thought himself worthy of all that fortune, that he thought she would choose him for the partner of her splendour, the company asked each other? "I am sure it is a thing to which Mr. Rushton for one would *never* give his consent," said the giver of the feast. The Rector was not quite so certain. "After all it would be no *mésalliance*, for they are exactly in the same position," he said; but then it was well known the Rector looked upon his association with Lucy's other guardians as more a joke than a serious duty. Talks were going on about

her in almost every group, everybody was interested in the great heiress; people wished to be introduced to her, as if the poor little girl had been a notability, and so to be sure she was.

The riding party went off rather earlier than the others, and before the whole party was got under weigh a considerable time elapsed. Philip had insisted upon putting his cousin into her saddle himself; he was not clever at so unusual an office, and he could not help feeling, when she was gone, that he had not done himself any good by his assiduities. He was as sensitive as a thermometer to the fluctuations of public opinion, and he perceived at once that he had done himself harm. The company in general were not unwilling to let him see that nobody particularly wanted him, and that though they were kind and invited him, they did not expect any very great advantage from his presence. Thus Philip spent the interval in wandering about in a somewhat vague manner, not sought by any one. He could never tell how it was that at last he found himself in one of the carriages by Katie Russell's side. He had not done it, nor had she done it, for Katie was greatly piqued by the persistent way in which he had avoided her, and her pride was up in arms; but when he turned his head and saw, in the gathering dusk, the little twist of the curl which he had been so utterly unable to analyse, a sudden change of sentiment, still farther beyond the reach of analysis, came over Philip. How was it? nothing more illogical, more unreasonable, ever happened to a philosophical schoolmaster. Instead of the uncomfortable state of effort in which he had spent the day, the young man's soul glided back in a moment into that curious lull of en-

chantment which had come over him at the Terrace. Once more the very air grew balmy and caressing, the earth smelt sweet, the night wind blew in his face like a caress, and all the individual sounds about ran into one hum of happiness, and satisfaction, and peace. No cause for it! only the fact that it was *that* girl, and not another who sat next him in the brake, among all the chattering and the laughter. Was there ever any cause so inadequate? but this was how it was. The carriage stopped opposite the Terrace to put down Katie. She had only a little way to walk from that point to the White House, which shone faintly through the darkness with a few lights in the windows. Philip did not quite know how, but somehow he had made his peace with Katie, and he it was who jumped down to help her out, and constituted himself her escort. They walked again side by side down the same enchanted road.

"There is no mist to-night, and not so many stars," he said; and Katie answered, "No, not half so many stars," showing, as he said to himself afterwards, that she remembered too. She was more serious now than after that first evening at the Terrace, walking along very demurely by his side, and owning that she was tired. "But we have had a very pleasant day, don't you think so, Mr. Rainy?" Katie asked; to which Philip answered, "Ye-es," with a little doubt.

"The drive back has been delightful," he said, "the air is so soft. I don't know that I enjoyed so much the first part. It irritates me, perhaps foolishly, to see the fuss all those people make with Lucy. It was really too much for me to-day; I felt bound to put a stop to it as far as I could. Lucy is a very nice

girl, but to see them, you would think there was nobody like her. It makes me angry. I daresay it is very foolish, for Lucy is sensible enough to know that it is not herself but her money that so much court was paid to. But the drive home was worth all the rest put together," Philip said, with fervour. This made Katie's head droop a little with shyness and pleasure.

"It was very nice," she said, in more guarded tones, and with a little sigh of content. "But, Mr. Rainy, you must not vex yourself about Lucy. That is what she has to go through, just as I must go through my governessing. She is sure to have everybody after her wherever she goes, but she is so sensible it never makes any difference; she is not spoiled a bit."

"Do you think so? do you really think so? that will make my mind much more easy about her," said Philip. As if Katie was a judge! This was the reflection she herself made; and Katie could scarcely help laughing, under the shadow of night, at the sudden importance of her own judgment. But, after all, however young one may be, one feels that there is a certain reasonableness in any reliance upon one's opinion, and she answered with a gravity that was not quite fictitious, that she was sure of it, and did all she could to comfort Philip, who, on his part, exaggerated his anxiety, and carefully refrained from all allusion to that secret unwillingness to let the great Rainy fortune go to anyone else, which had moved him powerfully during the day. They took leave at the door of the White House, as they had done before, but not till after a pause and a lingering talk, always renewed upon some fresh subject by Philip just as she held out

her hand to say good-night. He had held that hand quite two minutes in his, on the strength of some new and interesting subject which suddenly occurred to him at the last moment, when Katie, seized with a little panic, suddenly withdrew it and darted away. "Good night," she said, from the door-step, nodding her head and waving her hand as before, and once more Philip felt as if a curtain had dropped, shutting out heaven and earth, when the door opened and shut, and a gleam of light shone out, then disappeared. Analyse it! he could not analyse it. He had never been so happy before, nor so sad, nor so fortunate, nor so desolate; but how he could be so ridiculous as to be moved in this way, Philip could not tell. He went back along the dark road, going over every word she had said, and every look she had looked. Lucy's window shone all the way before him, and the lights in it glimmering out from the dark front of the Terrace. It seemed to Philip that he could not get rid of Lucy. He felt impatient of her, and of her window, which seemed to call him, shining as with a signal light. Its importunity was such, that he decided at last to cross the road and call at the door, and ask if she had got home in safety. It was an unnecessary question, but he was excited and restless, half hating Lucy, yet unable to overcome the still greater hatred he had, and terror, of seeing her fall into some one else's hands. When his voice was heard at the door, Mrs. Ford rushed out of her parlour with great eagerness.

"Come in, Philip, come in," she cried; "I heard the carriage stop, but what have you been doing all this time? I just hoped it might be [illegible]" [illegible] came close up to him and whispered

in such good spirits. She said you had been there; she said you had been very attentive. If you would like to have a horse to ride to go with them, to cut out that Raymond Rushton, don't you hesitate, Philip; tell them to send the bill to me."

"Is that Philip?" Lucy asked from the stairs, almost before the whisper was over. He was half flattered, half angry, at the cordiality of his reception. He walked upstairs to the drawing-room, feeling himself drawn by a compulsion which annoyed him, yet pleased him. The room was very bright with gaslight, the windows shut, as Mrs. Ford thought it right they should always be at such a late hour. Lucy had been superintending Jock, who was audible in his little room behind humming himself to sleep. "I thought it was your voice, Philip," she said. "Did you like it? Thank you for being so kind to me, but I thought sometimes you did not like it yourself."

"I liked it well enough; but what I did not like was to see what a position you have been put into, Lucy," said her cousin; "that was why I took so much trouble. It makes one think worse of human nature."

"Because they are kind to me?" said Lucy, with surprise.

"Because they are—absurd;" said Philip. "You must see very well they cannot mean all that. I should think a sensible girl would be disgusted. I wanted to show you what nonsense it all was, as if their whole happiness depended on showing you that waterfall, or the abbey tower or something. That was why I interfered."

"I thought," said Lucy, "it was out of kindness; and that everybody was kind as well as you."

"Kindness—that is all nonsense;" Philip felt, as he spoke, that of all the mistakes of the day none was so great as this attempt to make Lucy uncomfortable, and to throw suspicion upon all the attention she had received, including his own; but he could not help himself. "You will find out sooner or later what their motives are, and then you will remember what I have said."

Lucy looked at him very wistfully. "You ought to help me, Philip," she said, "instead of making it harder."

"How do I make it harder? I only tell you that all that absurd adulation must conceal some purpose or other. But I am always very willing to help you, Lucy," he said, softening; "that is what I tried to do to-day."

When he had administered this lecture, Philip withdrew, bidding her good night, without saying anything about the other good night which had preceded this. "You may always rely upon me," he said, as he went away. "Thank you," said Lucy, a little ruefully. He was her relation, and her natural counsellor; but how unlike, how very unlike to Sir Tom! She sighed, discouraged in her enjoyment of the moment, feeling that Philip was the best person to whom she could venture to confide any of those Quixotic projects which her father's will had made lawful and necessary. He was the very best person who could tell her how much was necessary to give ease of mind and leisure to a sick young barrister. Philip was the only individual within her reach who could possibly have satisfied her, or helped her on this point. She sighed as she assisted

at the putting out of the gas. There was nobody but Sir Tom.

Philip did not feel much more comfortable as he went away; he felt that he had done nothing but scold Lucy, and indeed his inclination was to find fault with her, to punish her if he could for the contradiction of circumstances. That she should be capable of taking away all that fortune and bestowing it upon some one who was a stranger, who had nothing to do with the Rainys, and who would probably condescend to, if he did not despise, the head of that family, Philip himself, was intolerable to him. He felt that he ought to interfere, he ought to prevent it, he ought to secure this wealth to himself. But then something gave him a tug exactly in the opposite direction. If it had but been Katie Russell who was the heiress! She was nobody; it would be madness for him, a young man on his promotion, to marry thus as it were in his own trade, and condemn himself to be nothing but a schoolmaster for ever. Indeed it would be folly to marry at all—unless he married Lucy. A young man who is not married has still metaphorically all the world before him. He is very useful for a dinner party, to fill up a corner. In most cases he is more or less handy to have about a house, to make himself of use. But a man who is married has come out from among the peradventures, and has his place fixed in society, whatever it may be. He has come to what promotion is possible, so far as society is concerned—unless indeed he has the power to advance himself without the help of society. Katie Russell was a simple impossibility, Philip said to himself, angrily, and Lucy—she was also an impossibility. There seemed nothing to

be done all round but to rail against fate. When he had settled this with a great deal of heat and irritation, he suddenly dropped all at once into the serenest waters, into an absolute lull of all vexation, into that state of semi-trance in which, though walking along Farafield streets, towards Kent's Lane, he was at the same time wandering on the edge of the Common, with a soft rustle beside him of a muslin dress, and everything soft, from the stars in the sky, and the night air blowing in his face, to his own heart, which was very soft indeed, melting with the tenderest emotion. It could not do anyone any harm to let himself go for this night only upon such a soft delightful current. And thus after all the agitations of the day, he ended it with his head in the clouds.

CHAPTER XII.

THE HARE WITH MANY FRIENDS.

It will be seen from all this that Mrs. Ford was but an indifferent guardian for an heiress. Her ideas of her duty were of a peculiar kind. She had newly furnished the drawing-room. She had sweetbreads and other dainties for dinner. If Lucy had been fond of cake, or muffins, or buttered toast, she might have revelled in them; but it did not occur to the careful housekeeper to give herself much trouble about Lucy's visitors. When Mrs. Rushton called, indeed, Mrs. Ford would sail into the room in her stiffest silk (which she kept spread out upon her bed, ready to put on at a moment's notice) and take her part in the conversation; but she saw the young men come and go with the

greatest indifference, and did not disturb herself out of her usual habits for them. Though she entertained the worst suspicions in respect to Mrs. Stone's motives, she did not object to St. Clair, neither did she dislike Raymond Rushton, though she saw through (as she thought) all his mother's devices. We will not attempt to explain this entirely feminine reasoning. It was the reasoning of a woman on a lower level of society than that which considers chaperons necessary. She saw no harm in St. Clair's appearance in the morning to teach Jock, though Lucy, not much better instructed than Mrs. Ford was always present at the lessons, and profited too in a mild way. Mr. St. Clair came every morning, turning the pink drawing-room into a school-room, and pursuing his work with so much conscience that Lucy herself began to learn a little Latin by listening to Jock's perpetual repetitions. She was very anxious that Jock should learn, and consented to hear all the story about the gentleman and the windmills, in order to bribe him. "I think he must have been cracked all the same," Lucy said. "Oh! I don't say, dear, that he was not a very nice gentleman; and after you have learned your lessons, you can tell me a little more." Mr. St. Clair made himself of great use to Lucy too. He brought her books in which she could read her history at much less cost than in her dry text-books; and helped her on in a way for which she was unfeignedly grateful. And after the intercourse of the morning there was the meeting afforded by that evening stroll in the half light after tea, which Jock considered his due. Mrs. Stone too loved that evening hour, and the soft dusk and rising starlight, and was always to be found on the common with her

light Shetland shawl over her handsome head, under the dutiful escort of her nephew. The two little parties always joined company, and a great deal of instructive conversation went on. On one of these evenings, Lucy had been waylaid by a poor creature with a pitiful story which went to the girl's heart. It had already become known in Farafield that there was in the Terrace a young lady who had a great deal of ready money, and a very soft heart.

"Who was that woman, Lucy?" said Mrs. Stone as they met at the door of the White House. They had been standing there, waiting for her, aunt and nephew both, watching for her coming. "I suppose she was a beggar; but you must take care not to give too much in that way, or to get yourself a reputation among them; you will be taken in on every side, and it will vex you to be deceived."

"Yes," said Lucy simply. "It would vex me very much, more than anything else I can think of. I would rather be beaten than deceived."

This made Mrs. Stone wince for a moment—till she reflected that she had no intention of deceiving Lucy, but, in reality, was trying to bring about the very best thing for her, the object of every girl's hopes.

"Then who was this woman?" she said.

"Indeed, I did not ask her name. She was—sent to me. What do you think is right?" said Lucy, "to give people money, or a little pension, or——"

"A little pension, my dear child! a woman you know nothing about. No, no, give me her name, and I will have her case inquired into, and if she is deserving——"

"I don't think it is anybody that is deserving, Mrs. Stone."

"Lucy! my dear, you must not—you really *must* not, act in this independent way. What do you know about human nature? Nobody who is not deserving should be allowed to come near a child of your age."

St. Clair laughed. "That might cut a great many ways," he said. "Perhaps, in that case you would have to banish most of the people Miss Trevor is in the habit of seeing."

"You, for example."

"That was what I was about to suggest," he said, folding his hands with an air of great humility. This beguiled Lucy into a smile, as it was meant to do; and yet there was a certain sincerity in it—a sincerity which seemed somehow to make up for, and justify in the culprit's own eyes, a good deal of deceit; though, indeed, St. Clair said to himself, like his aunt, that he was using no deceit; he was trying to get the love of a good and nice girl, one who would make an excellent wife; and what more entirely warrantable, lawful, laudable action could a young man do?

"You are making fun," said Lucy, "but I am in great earnest. Papa, in his will, ordered me to give away a great deal of money. He did not say anything about deserving; and if people are in great want, in need—is it not as hard, almost worse, for the bad people than for the good?"

"My dear, that is very unsafe, very dangerous doctrine. In this way you would reward the bad for having ruined themselves."

"Or make up to them," said St. Clair, "a little

—as much as anyone can make up for that greatest of misfortunes—for being bad."

Lucy looked from one to another, bewildered, not knowing which to follow.

"Yes, it is the greatest of all misfortunes; but still that is sophistry, that argument is all wrong. If the good and the bad got just the same, why should anyone be good?"

"Oh!" said Lucy with a heave of her breast; but though her heart rose and the colour came to her cheeks, she had not sufficient power of language to communicate her sentiments, and she was grateful to St. Clair who interposed.

"Do you think," he said, "that anyone is good, as you say, for what he gets? One is good because one can't help it—or for the pleasure of it—or to please some one else if it does not please oneself."

"For shame, Frank, you take all the merit out of goodness," his aunt said.

"Oh, no!" Lucy breathed out of the bottom of her heart. She could not argue, but her soft eyes turned upon St. Clair with gratitude. Perhaps he was not quite right either — but he was far more right than Mrs. Stone.

"Miss Trevor agrees with me," he said quietly, as if that settled the question; and Lucy would not have been human had she not been gratified, and flattered, and happy. She looked at him with a silent glow of thanks in her eyes, even though in her heart she felt a slight rising of ridicule—as if it could matter whether she agreed or not!

"This is all very fine," said Mrs. Stone, "but practically it remains certain that the people who

merit your kindness are those to whom you ought to give it, Lucy. I did not know your father had left instructions about your charities."

"He did not quite mean charities," said Lucy, "it was that I should help people who wanted help. He thought we—owed it, having so much;—and I think so too."

"And therefore you were meditating a pension to the first beggar that came in your way. My dear child! you will be eaten up by beggars if you begin with this wild liberality."

"It was not exactly—a beggar; it is not that I mean."

"I will tell you what to do," said Mrs. Stone, "take the names of the people who apply to you, and bring them to me. I will have the cases thoroughly sifted. We have really a very good organization for all that kind of thing in Farafield, and I promise you, Lucy, that if there is any very hard case, or circumstances which are very pitiful, even though the applicant be not quite deserving, you shall decide for yourself and give if you wish to give; but do let them be sifted first."

Lucy said nothing; to have "cases" which should be "sifted" by Mrs. Stone, did not seem at all to correspond with her instructions; and again it was St. Clair who came to her aid.

"The holidays are very nearly over," he said, "and we have a little problem of our own to settle. Do you know, Miss Trevor, my aunt meditates sending me away."

"Oh!" cried Lucy with alarm. She turned instinctively to Jock, who was roaming about the com-

mon before them, "but what should we do then?" she said with simplicity. The guardians had not yet interfered about Jock's training; they had left the little fellow in her hands; and Lucy was very much solaced and comforted by the arrangement in respect to her little brother which St. Clair's delicate health had permitted her to make.

"You forget that I am a wolf in sheep's clothing. I am a ravening lion, seeking whom I may devour. I am an enemy in the camp."

"Is that all because he is a Gentleman?" said Lucy to Mrs. Stone, with wondering eyes.

It was not Mrs. Stone who replied, but Miss Southwood, who had now come out to join them, and who had heard St. Clair's description of himself. She nodded her head, upon which was a close "cottage bonnet" of the fashion of thirty years ago.

"Yes, yes," she said, "it is quite out of the question, it is not to be permitted; not one of the parents would consent to it if they knew."

"The parents do not trouble me much," Mrs. Stone said, raising her head, "when I think a thing is right, I laugh at parents. They are perfectly free to take the girls away if they object; *I* judge for myself."

"But you must not laugh at parents," said the timid sister. "Maria! you make me shiver. I don't like you to say it even on the common, where there is nobody to hear. There is that child, with his big eyes; he might come out with it in any society. Laugh at — Parents! You might as well say you don't believe in the—British Constitution, or the—Reformation, or—even the House of Commons—or the

Peerage," Miss Southwood said hurriedly, by way of epitomising everything that is sacred.

"The Reformation is quite out of fashion, it is vulgar to profess any belief in that; and at all times," said Mrs. Stone, "popular institutions are to be treated with incredulity, and popular fallacies with contempt. Frank is not a ravening lion, he wants to devour nobody but—Jock. Yes, when you do bad exercises he would like to swallow you at one gulp."

"Is he going away?" said Jock, whom this reference to himself had roused to attention. Then he said with authority, "He had better come and live with us, there's a spare room; Lucy wants him as much as me. I know there is something she wants, for she looks at him when nobody is noticing, like this——" And Jock gave such an imitation of Lucy's look as was possible to him.

This strange speech made an extraordinary commotion in the quiet group. The two sisters and St. Clair sent each other rapid telegraphic messages by some kind of electricity, which went through and through them all. It was one look of wonder, satisfaction, consternation, delight, that flashed from one pair of eyes to the other, and brought a sudden suffusion to all their faces. As for Lucy, she took it a great deal more quietly. They had the look of having made a discovery, but she did not betray the consciousness of one who has been found out.

"Indeed, I hope Mr. St. Clair will stay. I don't think it would make any difference to the girls," she said; and then she added with a little excitement. "How strange it will be to see them all back again, and me so different."

Grammar had never been Lucy's strong point.

"Should'nt you like to come back?"

Lucy laughed and shook her head.

"I can't tell," she said. "I should—and yet how could I? I am so different. And by and by I should have to go away again. How strange it is that in such a little time, that has been nothing to them, so much should have happened to me."

There passed rapidly through Lucy's mind as she spoke a review of the circumstances and people who had furnished her with so many varied experiences. First and greatest stood the Randolphs, and that other world of life in London, which she knew was waiting for her in the shut up rooms, all shutters and brown-holland, in Lady Randolph's house. She seemed to see these rooms, closed and dim, with rays of light coming in through the crevices and everything covered up, in which her life was awaiting her. The other scenes flitted across her mind like shadows, the episode of the Russells, the facts of her present existence—all shadows; but Grosvenor Street was real, though all the shutters were shut. While this was passing through her mind, the others were giving her credit for visions very different. They glanced at each other again and Mrs. Stone took her nephew's arm and gave it a significant pressure. She was too much elated to be capable of much talk.

"We must see Lucy home," she said. "It is getting late, and dear little Jock ought to be in bed. I am always glad to see my girls come back—but there is one thing I shall grudge, these evening strolls; they have been very sweet."

"Then you have made up your mind, notwith-

standing Miss Trevor's intercession, (for which I thank her on my knees,) to send me away?"

"I cannot send you away while you are necessary to the comfort of—these dear children," Mrs. Stone said. There was a little break of emotion in her voice, and Lucy listened with some surprise. She was scarcely aware that she had interceded, yet in reality she was very glad that Mr. St. Clair should stay. She observed that he held her hand a moment longer than was necessary as he bade her good night, but she did not attach any meaning to this. It was an accident; she was too greatly indifferent to notice it at all.

And thus the tranquil days went on; the girls came back, but Mr. St. Clair did not go away. He was faithful to Jock and his lessons, and very sympathetic and kind to Lucy, though he did not at all understand the semi-abstraction into which she sometimes fell in his presence, and which was due to her anxious self-inquiries how she could propound to him the question of permanent help. Indeed this abstraction deceived St. Clair as much as his devotion was intended to deceive her. He was taken in his own toils, or, rather, he fell into the trap which little Jock had innocently laid for him. When Lucy looked at him, he thought that he could see the keen interest which the child had discovered in her eyes; and when she did not look at him, he thought she was averting her eyes in maiden bashfulness for fear of betraying herself; and he permitted himself to watch her with more and more tender and close observation. He was far cleverer and more experienced than Lucy, but her simplicity deceived him; and as he gave Jock his lessons, and watched the tranquil figure of the girl sitting by, St.

Clair felt, with a throb of excitement, that he was approaching a sort of fabulous termination, a success more great than anything he had ever actually believed in. For, as a matter of fact, he had never really believed in this chance which his aunt had set before him. He had "gone in for" Lucy as he would have "gone in for" any other temporary pursuit which furnished him with something to do, and satisfied the relatives on whom he was more dependent than was agreeable. But now suddenly the chase had become real, the chance a possibility, or more than a possibility. In such circumstances, what suitor could avoid a growing excitement? The moment the thing became possible, it became wildly exciting, a hurrying pursuit, a breathless effort. Thus while Lucy's thoughts were gravely fixed upon what she considered the chief business of her life, St. Clair, on his side, pursued the object of his with an ardour which increased as the end of the pursuit seemed to draw near. His voice took tender inflections, his eyes gave forth glowing glances, his aspect became more and more that of a lover; but Lucy, pre-occupied and inexperienced, saw nothing of this, and there was no one else to divine what the unlucky wooer meant, unless, indeed, it might be Jock, who saw and heard so much more than any one supposed, so much more than he himself knew.

Side by side along with this pursuit was that of which Mrs. Ford more clearly perceived the danger, the wooing of Mrs. Rushton and her son, Ray. Mrs. Ford's instinct was just, it was the mother who was the most dangerous of the two. Ray, with his hands in his pockets, did not present much of the natural appearance of a hero, and he had still less of the

energy and spontaneousness of a successful lover than he had of the appearance which wins or breaks hearts; but, nevertheless, by dint of unwearied exertions he was kept more or less up to the mark. Lucy had another constant visitor, about whose "intentions" it was less easy to pronounce. Philip Rainy began to come very often to the Terrace; he scorned Ray Rushton, and he paid the compliment of a hearty dislike to St. Clair; he was suspicious of both, and of all others who appeared in the neighbourhood; but this was in the true spirit of the dog in the manger, for his own purposes were more confused than ever, and he had no desire to make any effort to appropriate to himself the great prize. He stood by and looked on in a state of jealous watchfulness, sometimes launching a word of bitter criticism against his cousin; but unable to force himself to enter the lists, or take a single step to obtain what he could not make up his mind to resign. Sometimes Katie Russell would be with her friend, and then the young schoolmaster went through such tumults of feeling as nobody had thought him capable of. He was the only one that had any struggle in his mind; but his was a hard one. Love or Advantage, which was it to be? By this time it was very clear to him that they had no chance to be united in his case.

It was now October, but the weather was still warm, and it was still possible to play croquet on the lawn, amid an increased party of young people, the only kind of dissipation which Lucy's mourning made practicable. Mrs. Rushton's regrets were great that a dance was not possible; but she knew better than to attempt such a thing, and set all the gossips going.

"Next year everything will be very different," she said, "unless in the meantime some fairy-prince comes and carries our Lucy away."

"I am her guardian, and I will have nothing to say to any fairy-prince," Mr. Rushton said. They both gave a glance at their son as they spoke, who was a good-looking young fellow enough, but not much like a Prince Charmant. And Lucy smiled and accepted the joke quite calmly, knowing nothing of any such hero. She heard all his mother's praise of Raymond quite unmoved, saying "Indeed," and "That was very nice;" but without the faintest gleam of emotion. It was very provoking. Mrs. Rushton had made up her mind that Lucy was not a girl of much feeling, but yet would be insensibly moved by habits of association, and by finding one person always at her elbow wherever she moved. Raymond, in the meantime, had profited in a way beyond his hopes. He had got a horse, the better to accompany the heiress on her rides, and his money in his pocket was more abundant; but when his mother spurred him up to a greater display of devotion, the young man complained that he had no encouragement. "Encouragement!" Mrs. Rushton cried; "a girl with no-one-can-tell-how-many thousands a-year, and you want encouragement!" It seemed to her preposterous. Oh, that mothers could but do for sons what they are so lukewarm in doing for themselves! Mrs. Rushton did all that was possible. She told tales of her boy's courage and unselfishness, which were enough to have dazzled any girl, and hinted and insinuated his bashful love in a hundred delicate ways. But Lucy remained obtuse to everything. She was not clever nor had she much imagina-

tion, and love had not yet acquired any place in her thoughts.

This was to be the last croquet-party of the season, and all that was fair and fashionable and eligible in Farafield was gathered on the lawn, round which the scarlet geraniums were blazing like a gorgeous border to a great shawl. Rarely had Lucy seen so gay a scene. When she had herself got through a game, which she did not particularly care for, she was allowed to place herself in one of the low basket-chairs near the tea-table, at which Mrs. Rushton was always seated. "Was there ever such a child?" Mrs. Rushton said; "she prefers to sit with us dowagers rather than to take her share in the game."

"And what is still more wonderful," said an old lady, who perhaps did not care to hear herself called a dowager, "your son, Raymond, seems of the same opinion, though he is a hot croquet-player, as we all know."

"Oh, Ray; I hope he is too civil to think what he likes himself," his mother said, with well assumed carelessness. But this did not take anybody in. And all the elder people watched the heiress, as indeed the younger ones did also in the midst of their game; for though Lucy did not greatly care for his attendance there were some who prized Ray, and to whom his post at her elbow was very distasteful. He was very faithful to that post on this occasion, for St. Clair had posted himself on Lucy's other hand, and Raymond's energies were quickened by opposition.

"Why does not Miss Trevor play croquet?" St. Clair said.

"I have been playing; but it is prettier to look

better still let me help you. There must be some lady of my own standing who wants to be helped to some tea."

"You are too quick for me," she said, "you know that is not what I mean; you must not stay among the dowagers. The girls would never forgive me if I kept all the best men here."

"Ah, is that so?" he said. "But we are making ourselves very useful. Your son is taking charge of Miss Trevor, who is a very important person and requires a great deal of attention, and I am handing the cake. Mrs. Walford, you will surely take some, I am charged to point out to you how excellent it is."

"It is too good for me," said the old lady whom he addressed, shaking all the flowers on her bonnet. She was the curate's mother, and she thought it her duty to back her hostess up. "You should not mind us, Mr. St. Clair; the girls will be quite jealous if they see all the young men handing cake."

"Then I must take it to Miss Trevor," St. Clair said.

Meanwhile, Ray was taking advantage of his opportunity. "Won't you come for a turn, Miss Trevor? Some fellows are so pushing they never know when they are wanted. Do come if it was just to give him the slip. Why should he be always hanging on here? Why ain't he doing something? If a fellow is out in the world he ought to stay out in the world, not come poking about here."

"He is not strong, he is not well enough for his profession," Lucy said.

"Oh, that is bosh. I beg your pardon, Miss Trevor, but only look at him, he is *fat*. If he is not strong it is the more shame for him, it is because he has let himself get out of training," Ray said.

Lucy glanced at St. Clair with the cake in his hand, and a very small laugh came from her. She could not restrain it altogether, but she was ashamed of it. He *was* fat. He was more handsome than Ray, and a great deal more amusing; and he had an interest to her besides which no one understood. She could not dismiss from her mind the idea that he was a man to be helped, and yet she could not but laugh, though with a compunction. A man who can be called fat, appeals to no one's sympathies. She had got up rather reluctantly on Raymond's invitation, but he had not succeeded in drawing her attention to himself. She was still standing in the same place when St. Clair hastened back.

"You are going round the grounds," he said, "*à la bonne heure*, take me with you, please, and save me from croquet. I don't know the mysteries of the labyrinths, the full extent of Mr. Rushton's grounds."

"Oh, there is no labyrinth," Lucy said.

"And there are no mysteries," cried Ray indignantly, three people walking solemnly along a garden path abreast is poor fun. "Didn't my mother put croquet on the card?" he added, "it is always for croquet the people are asked. It is a pity you don't like it." Ray wanted very much to be rude, but he was better than his temper, and did not know how to carry out his intention.

"Isn't it?" said St. Clair coolly, "a thousand pities. I am always getting into trouble in consequence, but what can I do, Miss Trevor? I hate croquet. It is *plus fort que moi;* and you do not like it either?"

"Not very much," Lucy answered, and she moved along somewhat timidly between the two men, who

kept one on each side of her. Raymond did not say much. It was he who had brought her away, who had suggested "a turn," but it was this fellow who was getting the good of it. Ray's heart was very hot with indignation, but his inventive powers were not great, and in his anger he could not find a word to say.

"It is a peculiarity of society in England that we cannot meet save on some practical pretence or other. Abroad," said St. Clair with all the confidence of a man who has travelled, "conversation is always reason enough. After all it is talk we want, not games. We want to know each other better, to become better friends; that is the object of all social gatherings. The French understand all these things so much better than we."

This the two young people beside him listened to with awe, neither of them having ever set foot on foreign soil.

"For my part," cried Ray, suddenly; "I don't see the good of that constant chattering. Far better to do something than to be for ever talk—talking. It may suit the French, who ain't good for much else; but we want something more over here. Besides what can you talk about?" the young man went on; "things can't happen just to give you a subject, and when you have said it's a fine day, and what a nice party that was at the Smiths—what more have you got to say?"

"I quite agree with you," said St. Clair; "when you have no more than that to say it is a great deal better to play at something. But yet conversation has its advantages. Miss Trevor, here is one last rose. It is the last that will come out this season. Oh yes, there are plenty of buds, but they are belate

will never get to be roses. There will come a frost to-night and slay them all in their nests, in their cradles. This one is all the sweeter for being on the edge of ruin. I will gather it for you. A flower," he said, in a low tone, which Ray could only half hear, "is all a poor man can offer at any shrine." Raymond looked on, crimson with indignation. It was on his lips to bid this interloper offer what belonged to himself, not a flower out of another man's garden; and when St. Clair tore his finger on a thorn, the real proprietor of the rose was enchanted; but even this the fellow managed to turn to his own advantage. "It has cost me more than I thought," he said, so low that this time Ray could not hear anything but a murmur. "It is symbolical, I would give all that is in my veins; but it should buy you something better." Ray did not hear this; but Lucy did, and it filled her soul with wonder. Her eyes opened wide with surprise. She had not even read so many novels as she ought, and she was more puzzled than flattered. Besides Lucy's mind was confused with the thought, so strong in Raymond's consciousness, that to cut other people's roses was a doubtful generosity. She stammered a little as she thanked him, and looked as if asking permission of Ray.

"Oh! Mrs. Rushton ought perhaps to have it, as there are so few roses now," Lucy said.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FIRST PROPOSAL.

"Lucy, I never thought you were a flirt before," said Mrs. Rushton, half severe, half jocular. They did

not walk home with her now, as they had done in the warm August evenings. It was now dark, and almost all the company had dispersed, and the brougham had been ordered to take Miss Trevor home.

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As for St. Clair, he stumbled home across the common, almost losing his way, as the night was so dark,

with a little excitement in his mind too. When he got into Mrs. Stone's parlour, where she sat at the little meal which was her special and modest indulgence, he was greeted by both ladies with much interest and many questions. "Did it go off well?" Miss Southwood said, who liked to hear what there had been to eat at the "heavy tea" which followed the croquet party, and whether there had been wine on the table in addition to the tea. But Mrs. Stone looked still more anxiously in Frank's face. "Are you getting on? Are you making progress?" was what she said. To which he answered with a great deal of earnestness in the words of the poet:

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"Has it come so far as that?" said Mrs. Stone.

"I think so—but do not ask me any more questions," he said, and he was treated with the utmost delicacy and consideration. Without another word, a plate with some of Mrs. Stone's delicately-cooked dish was set before him and a large glass of East India sherry poured out, far better fare than the cold viands and tea prepared for Mrs. Rushton's many guests, while the conversation was gently led into another channel. His feelings could not have been more judiciously studied, for he had been too much intent upon Lucy to eat much at the previous meal, and agitation is exhausting. The only further allusion that was made to the crisis was when Mrs. Stone bade him good night. She kissed him on the cheek, and said softly, "I quite

on," said Lucy; "and I am not at all good. I have never been good at any game."

"You are quite good enough for me, Miss Trevor," said Ray. "I never can get on with your fine players, who expect you to study it; now Walford does study it. He gets up in the morning and practises."

"Mr. Walford is a clergyman, it is part of his duty," said St. Clair. "A layman has a great many exemptions. He may wear coloured ties, and he need not play croquet—unless he likes." Now Raymond had a blue tie, which was generally considered very becoming to him.

"Do you remember the day we had at the old Abbey?" said Ray. "I wonder if we could do that again this season. It was very jolly. Don't you think we might try it again, Miss Trevor? The ruins are all covered with that red stuff that looks so nice in the autumn; and I hear Mayflower is all right again this morning. I went to the stable to ask. I thought as sure as fate she had got a strain; I had a long talk with Simpson about her."

"It was very kind of you, Mr. Rushton."

"Oh, not at all kind—but you can't think I should not be interested in Mayflower. If she did not carry you so nicely even, she's a beauty in herself. And she does carry you beautifully—or rather it's you, Miss Trevor, that——"

"Yes," said St. Clair, "that is how I would put it. It is you, Miss Trevor, who witch the world with such noble horsemanship that any animal becomes a beauty. That is the right way to put it."

"But there is no noble horsemanship in my case," Lucy said with a smile.

"Oh, come, I don't know that," cried Ray; "if it comes to circus tricks that wouldn't answer for a lady! —but there aren't many better riders than you, Miss Trevor. You don't make any show, but you sit your mare as if you were cut out of one piece, you and she."

"That is quite a poetical description," St. Clair said. "Why am I only a pedestrian, while you two canter by? You cover me with dust, and my heart with ashes and bitterness when you pass me on the road. Why is one man carried along on the top of the wave, in the most desirable company, while another trudges along in the dust all by himself? Your ride opens all the problems of life, Miss Trevor, to the poor wretch you pass on the way."

Lucy looked at him wistfully. It was the look which Jock had described, and it moved St. Clair greatly, but yet he did not know what meaning was in her eyes. Mrs. Rushton saw it too, and it seemed to her that St. Clair was getting the best of it. She called to him suddenly, and he left his post with great reluctance. He had more to say than they had, he had more experience altogether; and it was not to subject the heiress to the seductions of Mrs. Stone's nephew that Mrs. Rushton had asked him here.

"Don't you play?" she said, "they are just looking for some one to make up the game. It would be so kind of you to join them. I know they are rather young for you, Mr. St. Clair, but it would be all the more kind if you were to play."

"It would be too kind," he said; he had all his wits about him, "they do not care for grandfathers like myself. Let me look on as becomes my years, or

better still let me help you. There must be some lady of my own standing who wants to be helped to some tea."

"You are too quick for me," she said, "you know that is not what I mean; you must not stay among the dowagers. The girls would never forgive me if I kept all the best men here."

"Ah, is that so?" he said. "But we are making ourselves very useful. Your son is taking charge of Miss Trevor, who is a very important person and requires a great deal of attention, and I am handing the cake. Mrs. Walford, you will surely take some, I am charged to point out to you how excellent it is."

"It is too good for me," said the old lady whom he addressed, shaking all the flowers on her bonnet. She was the curate's mother, and she thought it her duty to back her hostess up. "You should not mind us, Mr. St. Clair; the girls will be quite jealous if they see all the young men handing cake."

"Then I must take it to Miss Trevor," St. Clair said.

Meanwhile, Ray was taking advantage of his opportunity. "Won't you come for a turn, Miss Trevor? Some fellows are so pushing they never know when they are wanted. Do come if it was just to give him the slip. Why should he be always hanging on here? Why ain't he doing something? If a fellow is out in the world he ought to stay out in the world, not come poking about here."

"He is not strong, he is not well enough for his profession," Lucy said.

"Oh, that is bosh. I beg your pardon, Miss Trevor, but only look at him, he is *fat*. If he is not strong it is the more shame for him, it is because he has let himself get out of training," Ray said.

Lucy glanced at St. Clair with the cake in his hand, and a very small laugh came from her. She could not restrain it altogether, but she was ashamed of it. He *was* fat. He was more handsome than Ray, and a great deal more amusing; and he had an interest to her besides which no one understood. She could not dismiss from her mind the idea that he was a man to be helped, and yet she could not but laugh, though with a compunction. A man who can be called fat, appeals to no one's sympathies. She had got up rather reluctantly on Raymond's invitation, but he had not succeeded in drawing her attention to himself. She was still standing in the same place when St. Clair hastened back.

"You are going round the grounds," he said, "*à la bonne heure*, take me with you, please, and save me from croquet. I don't know the mysteries of the labyrinths, the full extent of Mr. Rushton's grounds."

"Oh, there is no labyrinth," Lucy said.

"And there are no mysteries," cried Ray indignantly, three people walking solemnly along a garden path abreast is poor fun. "Didn't my mother put croquet on the card?" he added, "it is always for croquet the people are asked. It is a pity you don't like it." Ray wanted very much to be rude, but he was better than his temper, and did not know how to carry out his intention.

"Isn't it?" said St. Clair coolly, "a thousand pities. I am always getting into trouble in consequence, but what can I do, Miss Trevor? I hate croquet. It is *plus fort que moi;* and you do not like it either?"

"Not very much," Lucy answered, and she moved along somewhat timidly between the two men, who

kept one on each side of her. Raymond did not s
much. It was he who had brought her away, wh
had suggested "a turn," but it was this fellow who w
getting the good of it. Ray's heart was very hot wi
indignation, but his inventive powers were not grea
and in his anger he could not find a word to say.

"It is a peculiarity of society in England that w
cannot meet save on some practical pretence or othe
Abroad," said St. Clair with all the confidence of
man who has travelled, "conversation is always reas
enough. After all it is talk we want, not games. W
want to know each other better, to become bett
friends; that is the object of all social gathering
The French understand all these things so much bett
than we."

This the two young people beside him listened
with awe, neither of them having ever set foot
foreign soil.

"For my part," cried Ray, suddenly; "I don't s
the good of that constant chattering. Far better to
something than to be for ever talk—talking. It m
suit the French, who ain't good for much else; but w
want something more over here. Besides what ca
you talk about?" the young man went on; "thin
can't happen just to give you a subject, and when yo
have said it's a fine day, and what a nice party th
was at the Smiths—what more have you got to say?"

"I quite agree with you," said St. Clair; "whe
you have no more than that to say it is a great de
better to play at something. But yet conversation h
its advantages. Miss Trevor, here is one last ros
It is the last that will come out this season. Oh ye
there are plenty of buds, but they are belate

will never get to be roses. There will come a frost to-night and slay them all in their nests, in their cradles. This one is all the sweeter for being on the edge of ruin. I will gather it for you. A flower," he said, in a low tone, which Ray could only half hear, "is all a poor man can offer at any shrine." Raymond looked on, crimson with indignation. It was on his lips to bid this interloper offer what belonged to himself, not a flower out of another man's garden; and when St. Clair tore his finger on a thorn, the real proprietor of the rose was enchanted; but even this the fellow managed to turn to his own advantage. "It has cost me more than I thought," he said, so low that this time Ray could not hear anything but a murmur. "It is symbolical, I would give all that is in my veins; but it should buy you something better." Ray did not hear this; but Lucy did, and it filled her soul with wonder. Her eyes opened wide with surprise. She had not even read so many novels as she ought, and she was more puzzled than flattered. Besides Lucy's mind was confused with the thought, so strong in Raymond's consciousness, that to cut other people's roses was a doubtful generosity. She stammered a little as she thanked him, and looked as if asking permission of Ray.

"Oh! Mrs. Rushton ought perhaps to have it, as there are so few roses now," Lucy said.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FIRST PROPOSAL.

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approve your action if you think the occasion is ripe for it, but do not be premature, my dear boy."

"No, I will not be premature," he said, smiling upon her. His heart expanded with a delightful self-confidence. It did not seem to him that there was any cause to fear.

And as he sat in the little room at the end of the long passage, where he was permitted to smoke, and watched the floating clouds that rose from his cigar, the imaginations which rose along with these circling wreaths were beautiful. He saw within his grasp a something sweeter than love, more delicious than any kind of dalliance. Wealth! the power of doing whatever he pleased, stepping at once into a position, he, the unsuccessful, which would leave all the successful men behind, and dazzle those who had once passed him by in the race. He was not disinclined towards Lucy. He felt it was in him indeed to be fond of her who could do so much for him. She could open to him the gates of paradise, she could make him the happiest man in the world. These hyperboles would be strictly true, far more true than they were in the majority of the cases in which they were uttered with fullest sincerity. But nobody could be more sincere than Frank St. Clair in his use of the well worn formulas. It was nothing less than blessedness, salvation, an exemption from ills of life which Lucy had it in her power to confer.

Next morning he went as usual to the Terrace and gave Jock his lesson with a mind somewhat disturbed. The little fellow with his grammar, the tranquil figure of the girl over her books, the ordinary aspect of the room with which he was growing so familiar, had the

strangest effect upon him in the state of excitement in which he found himself. The monotony of the lesson which had to be made out all the same, word by word, and the strange suspense and expectation in which he sat amid all the calmness of the domestic scene, made St. Clair's head go round. He did not know how to support it; and it was before his hour was out that he suddenly interrupted Jock's repetition with a sudden harsh whisper.

"Run and play," he said, "that is enough for to-day."

He had not even heard what Jock had been saying for the last ten minutes. The child looked up in the utmost surprise. He was stopped in the middle of a sentence, the words taken out of his mouth. He looked with his eyes opening wide.

"Run and play," St. Clair repeated, his lips were quite dry with excitement, "I want to speak to Lucy."

He had never spoken of her as Lucy before, he had never thought of suggesting that Jock should run and play. The child, though startled and indignant, yielded to the emergency which was unmistakable in his instructor's face. He looked at St. Clair for a moment, angry, then yielding to the necessity. And Lucy, whose interest in her history-book was never of an absorbing description, hearing the pause, the whisper, the little rustle of movement, looked up too. She saw with some astonishment that Jock was leaving the room.

"Have you got through your lessons already?" she cried.

St. Clair made the child an imperative sign, and got up and approached Lucy.

"I have sent him away," he said, and then stood for a moment looking down upon her. She, on her side, looked up with a surprised countenance. There could not have been a greater contrast than that which was apparent between them; he full of excitement, she perfectly calm, though surprised, wondering what it was he was about to say to her, and what his restrained agitation could mean. "I sent him away," said St. Clair, "because I wanted to say something to you, Miss Trevor; I could not delay it any longer. It has been almost more than I could do to keep silence so long."

"What is it?" she said. She was gently anxious, concerned about him, wondering if he was going to relieve her of her difficulty by confessing his wants, and putting it into her power to help him. It did not occur to Lucy that a man would be very unlikely to confide troubles about money to a girl. The distribution of her money occupied her own mind so much that it seemed, on the contrary, a likely matter to her that others should be so pre-occupied too.

"I have something to say to you," he repeated; but the look of her mild blue eyes steadfastly directed towards him, made what he had to say a great deal more difficult to St. Clair. A chill doubt penetrated into his mind; he hesitated. The least little uncertainty on her part, a blush, a shade of trouble, would have made everything easier to him; but Lucy was not excited. She "did seriously incline" to hear whatever he might have to say, but her eyes did not even veil their mild light, nor her cheek own the shadow of a flush. To discharge a declaration of love point-blank at a young woman who is gazing at you in

perfect composure and ease, without a shade of expectation in her countenance, is no easy matter. Besides, the fact of her composure was, of all things in the world, the most discouraging to her suitor; and it was what he had not anticipated. It came upon him as a revelation of the most chilling and discouraging kind. "Now that the moment has come," said St. Clair, "all the unkind judgments I may be exposing myself to seem to rise up before me. I never thought of them till now. The sincerity of my feelings was my defence. Now I feel overwhelmed by them. Miss Trevor—Lucy! I feel now that I have been a fool. What I wanted to say, is what I ought not to say."

He covered his face with his hands, and turned away from her. Lucy was much concerned. This little pantomime, which, however, was the sincerest part of all St. Clair's proceedings, took away her indifference at once. Her composed countenance was disturbed, a little colour came to her face.

"Oh, tell me what it is!" she cried.

When he looked at her, there was an air almost of entreaty on Lucy's face. She repeated her petition, "Tell me what it is," looking anxiously up to him. His heart beat very loudly. To

> "Put it to the touch,
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is not so easily done in reality as in verse. He drew a long, almost sobbing, breath. He dropped down suddenly on one knee, close to her. This was not any expedient of humility or devotion, but merely to bring himself on a level with her, and as such Lucy understood it, though she was surprised.

"Lucy!" he said (and this startled her still more)

"Lucy! don't you know what it is? cannot you guess? haven't you seen it already in every look of my face, in every tone of my voice? Ah, yes, I am sure you know it. I am not a good dissembler, and what else could have kept me here? Lucy! I am not good enough for you, but such as I am, will you have me?" he cried.

"*Have* you, Mr. St. Clair?" Lucy stammered out in consternation. She understood him vaguely, and yet she did not understand him. *Have* him! not give to him, but take from him. He had put it skilfully, without, however, being aware that he was doing so, excitement taking the place of calculation, as it often does. He held out his hands for hers, he looked at her with eyes full of entreaty, beseeching, imploring. There was nothing fictitious in their eloquence. He meant as sincerely as ever lover meant, and the yes or no was to him, as in the case of the most impassioned wooer, like life or death.

"Yes," he said, "have me! I am not much of a man, but with you I should be another creature. You would give me what I have always wanted, an inspiration, a motive. Since the first time I saw you, my happiness has been in your hands; for what else do you think I have been staying here? I have not done all I might have done, but, Lucy, if love had not held me, do you think I am good for nothing but to be tutor to a child? I have served for love, like Jacob, for you."

Lucy gave a low cry at this. She put her hands, not into his, but together, wringing them with sudden pain.

"Oh," she said, "why did not you tell me before? Oh, Mr. St. Clair, why did I not know?"

"Do you think I grudge it?" he said, "not if it had been as long as Jacob's. Do you think I regret having done this for you? not if it had been a lifetime; but, Lucy, you are too good to keep me in suspense, you will give me my reward at the end?"

And this time he took her clasped hands into his, drawing her to him. Lucy's courage had failed for a moment. Confusion and trouble and distress had taken away all the strength from her. There was a mist over her eyes, and her voice seemed to die away in her throat; but at his touch her girlish shyness came to her aid. A flush of shrinking and shame came over her. She drew away from him with an instinctive recoil.

"Mr. St. Clair, I don't know what you want from me. I am very grateful to you about Jock. I thought it was a great favour; but I did not know—Oh, I am very sorry, very sorry that you should have done anything that was not good enough, for me."

"I am not sorry," he said; his heart began to sink, but he looked more lover-like, more eager than ever. "You do not know how sweet it is to serve those one loves. Do you remember what Browning says about Dante's angel, and Raphael's sonnet?" He was a man of culture himself, and he did not reflect that Dante and Raphael and Browning were all alike out of Lucy's way, who stared at him with growing horror, as he pleaded, feeling that he must be citing spectators of his sacrifices for her, who would blame her, and say she used him badly. "This is my sonnet and my picture," he added; "'Once, and only once, and for one only.' Lucy! believe me, I should never have said anything about it, save to prove my dear love."

Blanched with pain and terror, her mild eyes opened widely, her breath coming quick, Lucy looked at him, kneeling by her side, and held herself away, leaning to the other hand to avoid the almost unavoidable contact. She kept her eyes fixed upon him to keep watch, more than anything else, upon what he would do next.

He saw that his cause was lost. There was neither love nor gratitude for love in the stare of her troubled eyes; but he would not give in without another effort. He said, softly sinking his voice, "You ask what I want from you, Lucy? Alas! I thought you would have divined without asking. Your love, dear, in return for mine, which I have given you. What I want is nothing less than your love—and yourself."

Again he put out his hands to take hers. To think that this should be all! the mere fancy of a little girl, all that stood between him and bliss, not perhaps the usual kind of lover's bliss, yet happiness, rapture. Impatience seized him, which he could scarcely restrain. Such a trifling obstacle as this, no obstacle at all, for it was clear she could not know what was for her own advantage, what would make her happy. There came an impatient inclination upon him to capture her by his bow and spear, to seize upon her simply and carry her off, and compel her to see what was for her own advantage. But, alas! the rules of conventional life were too many for St. Clair. Though this he felt would have been the natural and the sensible way of proceeding, he could not adopt it. He had still to kneel by her side, and do his best to persuade her. He could not force her to do even what was so evidently for her good.

The extremity of her need brought back Lucy's courage. She felt herself driven to bay, and it was evident that he must have no doubt as to the answer she gave. She looked at him as steadily as her trembling would permit, a deep flush came over her face, her lips quivered.

"Do you mean that you want to—marry me, Mr. St. Clair?" she said.

St. Clair felt that the moment was supreme. He threw all the passionate entreaty which was possible (and his passion was real enough) into his look, and, gathering her hands into both his, kissed them again and again.

"What else?" he said in a whisper, which must have thrilled through and through a heart in which there was any response. But in Lucy's there was no response. She stumbled to her feet with an effort, getting her hands free, and leaving her discomfited suitor kneeling by the side of her empty chair in ludicrous confusion. He had, indeed, to grasp hold of the chair, or the sudden energy of her movement would have disturbed his balance too.

"That is impossible, impossible!" Lucy cried, her cheeks burning, her mild eyes glowing, "you must never speak of it again, you must never mention it to me more. I could not," she added, feeling in his look that all was not settled, even by this vehement negative, I could not; I could never marry *you;* and I do not want to be married at all."

"Not now, perhaps, but some time you will," he said. He had risen from his knee, and stood opposite to her, banishing as best he could his confusion from his face. "Not now; I have been rash, I have

frightened you with an avowal which I ought not to have made so soon; but, Lucy, dearest, the time will come."

"Not now, or ever!" she cried, "oh, Mr. St. Clair, believe me! don't let it be all to go over another time; neither now nor ever. I may be frightened, I never thought of anything like this before; but now you have made me think of it, I know—*that* is impossible, it could never, never be!"

"You are very sure of yourself," he said with a little involuntary bitterness; for it is not pleasant to be rejected, even when you think it is the dictate of fright, and St. Clair did not think so, but only pretended so to think.

"Yes, I am very, very sure. Oh, indeed, I am sure. Anything, anything else! If I could help you to get on, if I could be of any use. Anything else; but that can never be!" said Lucy with tremendous firmness. He looked at her with cynical scorn in his eyes.

"I will never thrust anything upon a lady against her will," he said, "even to save her from the bloodhounds;—one cannot do that, but the time will come —I know very well the time will come." He was as much agitated as if indeed he had loved Lucy to desperation. He went to the table and collected his books with a tremendous vehemence. "I must now wish you good morning, Miss Trevor," he said.

And it was with a troubled heart that Lucy saw him go. What could she have done otherwise? She could not bear that anyone should leave her thus. She longed to be able to offer him—anything that would salve his wound. If he would only take some

of the money! if he would only accept her help, since she could not give him herself. She looked after him with her heart wrung, and tears in her piteous eyes.

CHAPTER XIV.

ONE DOWN, AND ANOTHER COME ON.

THIS was Lucy's first experience of love-making. It is needless to say that it was very far from being her last; but for the moment it was an appalling revelation to her, an incident of the most disturbing and disquieting kind. She was alone for a long time after St. Clair's withdrawal. It was the morning, the time when Mrs. Ford was occupied with household concerns, and Jock, being freed sooner than usual had betaken himself to one of his habitual corners with a book, and was thousands of mental miles away from his sister. She remained alone in that pink drawing-room, in which already she had spent so many lonely hours. There she stood hidden behind the curtains, and watched St. Clair speeding across the road, that skirted the Common, to the White House. She had seen him coming and going a great many times with placid indifference. But she could not be indifferent to anything about him now. His hasty pace, so unlike the usual stateliness of demeanour in which he resembled his aunt, the books under his arm, his stumble as he rushed over the rough ground, all went to Lucy's heart. She was not sorry that she had given forth so determined a decision. That she felt at once, with her usual good sense, was unavoidable. It was

not a question upon which any doubt could be left. But she was very sorry to have given him pain, very sorry that it had been necessary. She felt pained and angry that such an appeal should have been made to her, yet at the same time self-reproachful and sore, wondering how it was her fault, and what she could have done. It dismayed her to think that she had voluntarily and deliberately inflicted pain, and yet what alternative had been left her? Now, she thought to herself sadly, here was an end of all possibility of helping a man who was poor, and whom she would have been so glad to help. He would not take anything from her now, he would be angry, he would reject her aid, although so willingly given. This gave Lucy a real pang. She could not get it out of her mind. How foolish, she moralised, to put off a real duty like this, to let it become impossible! She was sitting pondering very sadly upon the whole matter, asking herself wistfully if anything could be done, when Mrs. Rushton came in, full of the plan which Raymond had proposed the evening before. Mrs. Rushton was always elated by a new proposal of pleasure-making. It raised her spirits even when nothing else was involved. But in this case there was a great deal more involved.

"It is the very thing to finish the season," she said, "we have had a very pleasant season, especially since you came back, Lucy. You have made us enjoy it twice as much as we usually do. For one thing, home has been so much more attractive than usual to Ray. Oh, he is always very good, he does not neglect his own people: still young men will be young men, and you know even Shakspeare talks of 'metal more attractive'

than a mother. So as I was saying—Oh, how do you do, Mrs. Ford?"

As usual, Mrs. Ford made her appearance, sweeping in her purple silk, which was of a very brilliant and hot hue, and put every other colour out. Her punctual attendance, when ladies came to see Lucy, served her purpose very well, for it made it apparent to these ladies that Lucy's present hostess was a very dragon of jealous carefulness, and was likely to guard the golden apples against all comers as she did from them.

"How do you do?" said Mrs. Ford stiffly, taking a stiff and highbacked chair.

"It is a very fine day," said Mrs. Rushton, "what pleasant weather we are having for this time of the year! I was remarking to Lucy that it had been the most enjoyable summer. I always say that for young people there is nothing so enjoyable as outdoor parties when the weather is good. They get air, and they get exercise, far better than being cooped up in stuffy ball-rooms. I feel quite thankful to Lucy, who has been the occasion of so many nice friendly meetings."

"She has had a deal too much gaiety, I think," said Mrs. Ford, "considering that her poor dear father has not been much more than six months in his grave."

"You cannot really call it gaiety; oh no, not gaiety! a few nice quiet afternoons on the lawn, and just one or two pic-nics. No, Lucy dear, you need not be frightened, I will never suffer you to do anything inconsistent with your mourning. You may rely on me. If anything I am too particular on that point.

nice black frocks," said Mrs. Rushton with fervour, "have never been out of character with anything. I have taken the greatest care of that."

"I don't say anything about the afternoons," said Mrs. Ford, "but I know that it was half-past ten when your carriage came to the door last night with Lucy in it. I don't hold with such late hours. Ford and me like to be in bed at ten o'clock."

"Ah, that is very early," Mrs. Rushton said, with an indulgent smile, "say eleven—and I will take care that Lucy has some one with her to see her safe home."

"Oh, for that matter, there's always plenty with her," said the grumbler, "and more than I approve of. I don't know what girls want with all that running about. We never thought of it in our day. Home was our sphere, and there we stayed, and never asked if it was dull or not."

"That is very true: and it was very dull. We don't bring up our children like that nowadays," said Mrs. Rushton, with that ironical superiority which the mother of a family always feels herself justified in displaying to a childless contemporary. Mrs. Ford had no children to get the advantage of the new rule. "And," she added, "one feels for a dear child like Lucy, who has no mother, that one is doubly bound to do one's best for her. How poor dear Mrs. Trevor would have watched over her had she been spared! a motherless girl has a thousand claims. And, Lucy," continued her indulgent friend, "this is Ray's party. It is he that is to manage it all; he took it into his head that you would like to see the abbey again."

"Oh, yes," said Lucy, surprised that they should show so much thought for her, but quite ready to be pleased and grateful too.

"He and his sister will come and fetch you at two o'clock," she continued, "it will be quite hurriedly got up, what I call an impromptu—but all the better for that. There will be just our own set. Mrs. Stone, of course it would be useless to ask now that school has begun again; but if there is any friend whom you would like to have—"

It was as if in direct answer to this half question that at that moment the door opened and Katie Russell all smiles and pleasure, came in. "Lucy," she cried, "Bertie has come, as I told you, he wants so much to see you, may I bring him in? Oh, I beg your pardon, Mrs. Ford, I did not see that you were here."

"Don't mention it," said Mrs. Ford grimly, "most folks do the same."

"Is it your brother, the author?" said Mrs. Rushton excited. She was so far out of the world, and so little acquainted with its ways that she felt, and thought it the right thing to show that she felt, an interest in a real living novelist. "Lucy, we must have him come to the pic-nic," she cried.

But she was not so enthusiastic when Bertie appeared. His success had made a great difference in Bertie's outward man; he was no longer the slipshod youth of Hampstead, by turns humble and arrogant, full of boyish assurance and equally boyish timidity. Even in that condition he had been a handsome young fellow, with an air of breeding which must have come from some remote ancestor, as there was no nearer way by which he could have acquired it. When

walked into the room now, it was as if a young prince had suddenly appeared among these commonplace people. It was not his dress, Mrs. Rushton soon decided, for Raymond was as well dressed as he—nor was it his good looks, though it was not possible to deny them; it was—more galling still—*something* which was neither dress nor looks, but which he had, and, alas Raymond had not. Mrs. Rushton gazed at him open-eyed, while he came in smiling and gracious, shaking hands with cordial grace.

"It is not my own boldness that brings me," he said, "but Katie's. I am shifting the responsibility off my shoulders on to hers, as you ladies say we all do; but for Katie's encouragement I don't know if I would have ventured."

"I am very glad to see you," Lucy said, and then they all seated themselves, the central interest of the group shifting at once to the new-comer, the young man of genius, the popular author. He was quite sensible of the duties of his position, and treated the ladies round him *en bon prince* with a suitable condescension to each and to all.

"I have a hundred things to say to you from my mother," he said, "she wishes often that you could see her in her new house, where she is very comfortable. She thinks you would be pleased with it." This was said with a glance of confidential meaning, which showed Lucy that, though Katie was not aware of it, her brother knew and acknowledged the source from which his mother's comfort came. And "It is very kind of you to admit us at this untimely hour," he said to Mrs. Ford, looking at her purple silk with respect, as if it had been the most natural morning dress

in the world. "Katie is still only a school-girl, and is guided by an inscrutable system. I stand aghast at her audacity; but I am very glad to profit by it."

"Oh, as for audacity," said Mrs. Ford, "that is neither here nor there, we are well used to it; but whenever you like to come, Mr. Russell, you'll find a welcome. I knew your good father well, and a better man never was—"

"Indeed," said Mrs. Rushton, eager to introduce herself, "I must be allowed to say so too. I knew Mr. Russell very well, though I never had the pleasure of making acquaintance with his family. I am afraid after the society you must have been seeing you will find Farafield a very benighted sort of place. There is nothing that can be called society here."

"That is so much the better," said Bertie graciously, "one has plenty of it in the season, it is a relief to be let alone: and my object in coming here is not society."

"Oh, I told you, Lucy," cried his sister, "he has come to study."

A frown crossed Bertie's face; he gave her a warning look. "I want rest," he said, "there is nothing like lying fallow. It does one all the good in the world."

"Ah!" cried Mrs. Rushton, "I know what that means. You have come to take us all off, Mr. Russell; we will all be put into your new book."

Bertie smiled, a languid and indulgent smile. "If I could suppose that there were any eccentricities to be found in your circle," he said, "perhaps—but good breeding is alike over all the world."

Mrs. Rushton did not quite know what this n

but it was either a compliment or something that sounded like one. She was delighted with this elegant young man of genius, who was so familiar with and indifferent to society. "If you will come to the little pic-nic I am planning for to-morrow you shall judge for yourself," she said; "and perhaps Mrs. Stone will let your sister come too," she added with less cordiality. Katie, whom everyone knew to be only a governess-pupil, had not attracted her attention much. She had been accepted with toleration now and then as Lucy's friend, but as the sister of a young literary lion, who no doubt knew all kinds of fine people, Katie became of more importance. Bertie took the invitation with great composure, though his sister, who was not *blasée*, looked up with sparkling eyes.

"To-morrow?" he said, "I am Katie's slave and at her disposal. I will come with pleasure if my sister will let me come."

Was it wise? Mrs. Rushton asked herself with a little shiver. She made a mental comparison between this new comer and Ray. The proverbial blindness of love is not to be trusted in, in such emergencies. His mother saw, with great distinctness, that Raymond had not that air, that *je ne sais quoi;* nor could he talk about society, nor had he the easy superiority, the conscious genius of Bertie. But then the want of these more splendid qualities put him more on Lucy's level. Lucy (thank Heaven!) was not clever. She would not understand the other's gifts; and Ray was a little, just a little taller, his hair curled, which Bertie's did not; Mrs. Rushton thought that, probably, the author would be open to adulation, and would like to be worshipped by the more important members of the community.

What could he care for a bit of a girl? So, on the whole, she felt herself justified in her invitation. She offered the brother and sister seats in the break, in which she herself and the greater part of her guests were to drive to the Abbey, and she made herself responsible for the consent of Mrs. Stone. "Of course I shall ask Mr. St. Clair, Lucy," she said. "I always like to ask him, poor fellow! he must be so dull with nothing but ladies from morning till night."

"Happy man," Bertie said, "what could he desire more?"

"But when those ladies are aunts, Mr. Russell?"

"That alters the question. Though there is something to be said for other people's aunts," said Bertie. "I am not one of those who think all that is pleasant is summed up in youth."

"Oh! you must not tell me that. You all like youth best," said Mrs. Rushton; but she was pleased. She felt her own previsions justified. A young man like this, highly cultivated and accustomed to good society, what could he see in a little bread and butter sort of girl like Lucy? She gave Bertie credit for a really elevated tone. She was not so worldly-minded as she supposed herself to be—for she did not take it for granted that everybody else was as worldly-minded as herself.

This succession of visitors and events drove the adventure of the morning out of Lucy's head. And when she went out with Jock in the afternoon, Bertie met them in the most natural way in the world, and prevented any relapse of her thoughts. He told her he was "studying" Farafield, which filled Lucy w[illegible] awe; and begged her to show him what was m[illegible]

markable in the place. This was a great puzzle to the girl, who took him into the market-place, and through the High Street, quite unconscious of the scrutiny of the beholders. "I don't think there is anything that is remarkable in Farafield," she said, while Bertie smiling—thinking involuntarily that he himself, walking up and down the homely streets, with an artist's eye alive to all the picturesque corners, was enough to give dignity to the quiet little country place—walked by her side, very slim and straight, the most gentleman-like figure. There were many people who looked with curiosity, and some with envy, upon this pair, the women thinking that only her money could have brought so aristocratic a companion to the side of old John Trevor's daughter, while the men concluded that he was some needy "swell," who was after the girl, and thus exhibited himself in attendance upon her. It came to Mrs. Rushton's ears that they had been seen together, and the information startled her much; but what could she do? She fell upon Raymond, reproaching him for his shilly-shally. "Now you see there is no time to be lost; now you see that other people have their wits about them," she said; "if you let to-morrow slip, there will be nothing too bad for you," cried the exasperated mother. But Raymond, though he was more frightened than could be told in words, had no thought of letting to-morrow slip. He too felt that things were coming to a crisis. He stood at the window with his hands in his pockets and whistled, as it were, under his breath. He was terribly frightened; but still he felt that what was to be done, must be done, if anything was to be done. So long as it was only St. Clair, whom he thought middle-aged, and who was certainly fat, who

was against him, he had not been much troubled; but this new fellow was a different matter. He did not put his resolution into such graceful words, but he too felt that it was time

> "To put it to the touch
> To gain or lose it all."

As for Lucy, no thought of the further trials awaiting her, entered her mind; but she was not happy. It had ceased to be possible to take those evening strolls which had brought her into such intimate relations with the inmates of the White House. They had been given up since the girls came back; and, indeed, the days were so much shorter that they had become impracticable. But when she came upstairs to her lonely drawing-room after tea, when it was not yet completely dark, she could not choose but go to the window, and look out upon the dim breadth of the common, and the lights which began to twinkle in Mrs. Stone's windows. The grassy breadths of broken ground, the brown furze bushes, all stubbly with the husks of the seedpods, the gleam of moisture here and there, the keener touch of colour in the straggling foliage of the hedges, and here and there a half-grown tree, were dim under a veil of mist when she looked out. The last redness of the sunset was melting from the sky. A certain autumnal sadness was in the bit of homely landscape, which, though she was not imaginative, depressed Lucy as she stood at the window. She was altogether depressed and discouraged. Mrs. Ford had been, if not scolding, yet talking uncomfortably to her husband across the girl, of the rudeness of Lucy's friends. "Not that I would go to

their parties if they begged me on their knees," Mrs. Ford had said, "but the unpoliteness of it! And to ask those Russells before my very face, who are not a drop's blood to Lucy." "Well, well, my dear, never mind," her husband had said, "when she's married there will be an end of it." "Married!" Mrs. Ford had said in high disdain. And then Lucy had got up and hastened away, wounded and shocked and unhappy, though she scarcely could tell why. She came and stood at the window, and looked out with the tears in her eyes. Everybody had been very kind to her, but yet she was very lonely. She had a gay party to look forward to the next day, and she believed she would enjoy it; but yet Lucy was lonely. People seemed to struggle over her incoherently, for she knew not what reason, each trying to push the other away, each trying to persuade her that the other entertained some evil motive; and everything seemed to concur in making it impossible for her to carry out her father's will. And there was nobody to advise, nobody to help her. Philip, to whom she would so gladly have had recourse, was cross and sullen, and scolded her for no reason at all, instead of being kind. And Sir Tom, who was really kind, whom she could really trust to—what had become of him? Had he forgotten her altogether? He had not written to her, and Lucy had not the courage to write to him. What could she do to get wisdom, to know how to deal with the difficulties round her? She was standing within the curtains of the window, looking out wistfully towards the White House, and wondering how Mr. St. Clair would speak to her to-morrow, and if Mrs. Stone would know and be angry, when she was startled by the

sound of wheels, and saw a carriage—nay, not a carriage, but something more ominous, the fly of the neighbourhood, the well-known vehicle which took all the people about the common to the railway, and was as familiar as the common itself. It rattled along to the White House, making twice the noise that any other carriage ever made. Could they be going to a party? Lucy asked herself with alarm. But it was no party. There was just light enough left to show that luggage was brought out. Then came the glimmer of the lantern dangling at the finger end of the gardener —that lantern by which, on winter nights, Lucy herself had been so often lighted home. Then she perceived various figures about the door, and Mrs. Stone coming out, with a whiteness about her head which betrayed the shawl thrown over her cap; evidently some one was going away. Who could be going away?

After a while the fly lumbered off from the door, leaving that gleam of light behind, and some one looking out, looking after the person departing. Lucy's heart beat ever quicker and quicker. As the fly approached the lamp-post that gave light to the Terrace, she saw that it was a portmanteau and other masculine belongings that were on the top, and to make assurance sure, a man's head glanced out and looked up at her window. Lucy sank down into a chair and cried. It was her doing. She had driven St. Clair away, out into the hard world, with his heart-disease and his poverty—she who had been brought into being and made rich, for no other end than to help those who were poor!

CHAPTER XV.

THE PICNIC.

LUCY spent a most melancholy night. It was dreadful to her to think that she had been not only "no good," but the doer of harm. She imagined to herself poor St. Clair, with that weakness which prevented him from realizing the hopes of his friends, going away from the shelter and comfort his aunt had provided for him, and the rest of this quiet place, and struggling again among others each more able to fight their way than he—and all because of her, who should have smoothed his way for him, who had the means to provide for him, to make everything easy. It is impossible to describe the compunctions that filled Lucy's inexperienced heart. It seemed all her fault, his departure, and even his incomprehensible proposal—for how could he ever have thought of such a thing of himself, he a Gentleman, and she only a girl, at school the other day—and all the disappointment and grief which must have been caused by his going away, all her doing! though she had meant everything that was kind, instead of this trouble. When she saw Jock preparing for his lessons, her distress overpowered her altogether. "I am afraid Mr. St. Clair is not coming," she said, faltering, at breakfast; "I think he has gone away," feeling herself almost ready to cry. "Gone away!" said the Fords in a breath; and they exchanged looks which Lucy felt to be triumphant. "And a good riddance too," cried Mrs. Ford, "a fellow not worth a penny, and giving himself airs as if he had hundreds in his pocket." "My dear," her husband said, "perhaps you

are too severe. I think sometimes you are too severe; but I can't say I think him much of a loss, Lucy, if you will take my opinion." Lucy was not much comforted by this deliverance, and after hearing a full discussion of Mrs. Stone and her belongings, was less consoled than ever. If they were poor so much the more need for him to be successful, so much the more dismal for him to fail. Lucy could not settle to her own work, she could not resume her own tasks so dutifully undertaken, but in which she felt so little interest. It was easy for Jock to dispose of himself on the great white hearth-rug with his book. She could not help saying this as the sound of the leaves he turned caught her ears. "It does not matter for you," she said, "you are only a small boy, you never think about anything, or wonder and wonder what people are going to do." Jock raised his head from the book, and looked at her with his big eyes. He had been conscious of her restlessness all along, though he was reading the Heroes which St. Clair had given him. Her little uncomfortable rustle of movement, her frequent gazings from the window, the undercurrent of anxiety and uncertain resolution in the air, had disturbed Jock in spite of himself. He lay and watched her now with his head raised. "I wish," said Jock, "we could get Heré or somebody to come." But Lucy was more insulted than helped by this speech. "What is the use of trying to speak to you about things?" she cried exasperated, "when you know we are real living creatures, and not people in a book!" And Lucy in her distress cried, which she was not in the habit of doing. Jock raised himself then to his elbow, and looked at her with great interest and sympathy. "Heré can't come to us," he

said seriously, "but she was just a lady only bigger than you are. Couldn't you just go yourself?"

"Jock, do you think I should go?" the girl cried. It was like consulting an oracle, and that is what all primitive people like to do.

"Yes," said the little boy, dropping down again satisfied upon his fleecy rug. How could he know anything about it? but Lucy took no time to think. She hastened to her room and put on her hat, and was hurrying along the road to the White House, before she had thought what to say when she got there. It was just twelve o'clock, a moment at which Mrs. Stone was always to be found in her parlour, resting for half an hour in the middle of her labours. Lucy found herself tapping at the parlour door in the fervour of her first resolution. She went in with eyes full of tearful light. Mrs. Stone and Miss Southwood were both in the room. They turned round with great surprise at the sight of her.

"How do you do, Lucy?" Mrs. Stone said very coldly, not even putting out her hand.

"Oh," cried Lucy, full of her generous impulse. "Why has Mr. St. Clair gone away?"

"I told you," said Miss Southwood, "I told you! the girl does'nt know her own mind."

Mrs. Stone caught her this time by both hands. "Lucy," she cried, "don't trifle or be a little fool. If this is what you mean, Frank will come back. You may be sure he did not want to go away."

Lucy felt the soft hands which took hold of her, grip like fingers of iron, and felt herself grappled with an eager force she could scarcely withstand. They came round her with anxious faces, seizing hold upon

her. For a moment she almost gasped for breath, half suffocated by the closing in around her of this trap into which she had betrayed herself. But the emergency brought back her strength and self-command. "It is not that," she said with poignant distress and shame, though she had no reason to be ashamed. "Oh forgive me, it is not that!"

Mrs. Stone dropped her hands as if they had been hot coals, and turned away. "This is a moment when I prefer to be alone, Miss Trevor," she said, as she was in the habit of saying to the girls who disturbed her retirement; "if there is anything in which I can serve you, pray say so without any loss of time. I reserve this half hour in the day to myself."

Thus chilled after the red heat of excitement into which she had been raised, Lucy stood trembling scarcely knowing what to say.

"I beg your pardon," she faltered at last, "I came because I was so unhappy about—Mr. St. Clair."

"Lucy; what do you mean?" cried Miss Southwood. "Don't frighten the child, Maria! what *do* you mean? You drive him away, and then you come and tell us you are unhappy. What do you intend us to understand?"

"I wanted to come to you before," said Lucy with great humility, looking at Mrs. Stone, who had turned away from her. "Please listen to me for one moment. You said he was not strong, not able to do all he wished. Mrs. Stone, I have a great deal of money left me by papa to be given away."

Mrs. Stone started to her feet with sudden passion. "Do you mean to offer him money?" she cried.

This time Lucy did not falter, she confronted even

the tremendous authority of Mrs. Stone with a steady though tremulous front, and said: "Yes," very quietly and distinctly, though in a voice that showed emotion. Her old instructress turned on her commanding and imposing, but Lucy did not quail, not even when Mrs. Stone repeated the words, "to offer him money!" in a kind of scream of dismay.

"Maria, let us hear what she means: we don't know what she means; Lucy tell it all to me. She is naturally put out. She cannot bear Frank to go away. Let me hear what you mean, Lucy, let me hear!"

It was Miss Southwood who said this, putting herself between Lucy and her sister. Miss Southwood was not imposing, her anxious little face conciliated and calmed the girl. How comfortable it is, how useful to have a partner, or a brother, or sister, entirely unlike yourself! It is as good as being two persons at once.

"Miss Southwood, papa left me a great deal of money—"

At this the listener nodded her head a great many times with a look of pleased assent: then shook it gently and said. "But you should not think too much of your money, Lucy, my dear."

"—to give away," said Lucy hastily; "he left me this duty above all, to give away to those who needed it. There is a great deal of money, enough for a number of people."

"Oh!" Miss Southwood cried out in a voice which ran up a whole gamut of emotion. She put out her two hands, groping as if she had suddenly become blind. Consternation seized her. "Then you are not—"

she said. "Maria, she cannot be such a great heiress after all!"

Mrs. Stone's astonished countenance was slowly turned upon Lucy from over her sister's shoulder. She gazed at the girl with an amazement which struck her dumb. Then she said with an effort, "You meant to offer some of this—charitable fund—to *my* nephew—"

"It is not a charitable fund—it is not charity at all. It was to be given in sums which would make the people independent. Why should you think worse of me than I deserve?" cried Lucy, "it is not my fault. I did not want him to say—*that*—. I wanted to help him—to offer him—what papa left."

Here Mrs. Stone burst out furious. "To offer him —my nephew—a man: and you a little chit of a girl, a nobody—help as you call it—alms! charity!"

"Maria—Maria!" said Miss Southwood. "Stop, I tell you. It is all nonsense about alms and charity. Good honest money is not a thing to be turned away from anyone's door. Lucy, my dear, speak to me. Enough to make people independent! Old Mr. Trevor was a wonderfully sensible old man. How much might that be? You have no right to spoil the boy's chance, oh! hold your tongue, Maria! Lucy, Lucy, my dear, do tell *me*."

"I never knew that was what he meant, Miss Southwood," said Lucy eagerly. "How could I think that he—a Gentleman——" She used such a big capital for the word, that it overbalanced Lucy's eloquence. "And I only a little chit of a girl," she added with a tremulous laugh, "it is quite true. But there is this money, and I *have* to give it away. I have no choice. Papa said—— And since he is not strong, and wants

rest. Gentlemen want a great deal more money than women; but if it was only for a short time, till he got strong—perhaps," said Lucy faltering and hesitating, "a few thousand pounds—might do?"

The two ladies stood and stared at her confounded—they were struck dumb, both of them. Mrs. Stone's commanding intellect stood her in as little stead as the good Southwood's common sense, upon which she so prided herself. A few thousand pounds?

"And it would make me—so much more happy!" Lucy said. She put her hands together in the fervour of the moment entreating them; but they were both too entirely taken by surprise, too much overwhelmed by wonder and confusion to speak. Only when Mrs. Stone moved, as if in act to speak, Miss Southwood burst forth in alarm.

"Hold your tongue—hold your tongue," she said, "Maria!" never in all her life had she so ventured to speak to her dominant sister before.

But when Lucy finally withdrew from this interview, it was with a heart calmed and comforted. Mrs. Stone was still stupefied; but her sister had recovered her wits. "You see, Maria, this money is not hers. It is trust money; it is quite a different thing: and she is not such a great heiress after all. Dear Frank, after all, might have been throwing himself away," was what Miss Southwood said. Lucy heard this, as it were, with a corner of her ear, for, at the same time, the bell began to ring at the White House; and it was echoed faintly by another at a distance which she alone understood. This was the bell for Mrs. Ford's early dinner, and Lucy knew that the door had been opened at No. 6 in the Terrace, in order that she, if

within hearing, might be summoned home. And that was not an appeal which she ventured to disobey.

This morning's adventure made Lucy's heart much more light for her pleasure in the afternoon. When Raymond and Emmie rode up at two o'clock, he on the new horse which his father had permitted to be bought for this very cause, she sitting very clumsily on a clumsy pony—Lucy and Jock met them with nothing but smiles and brightness. It was not so bright as the day on which the expedition had been planned. The autumn afternoon had more mist than mellow fruitfulness in it, and there was a cold wind about which shook the leaves in clouds from the trees. And Raymond, for his part, was nervous and uncomfortable. He had a deep and growing sense of what was before him. At a distance, such a piece of work is not so terrible as when seen close at hand. But when time has gone on with inexorable stride to the very verge of a moment which nothing can delay, when the period has come beyond all possibility of escape, then it is not wonderful if the stoutest heart sinks. Raymond had got some advantages already by the mere prospect of this act to come. He had got a great many pleasant hours of leisure, escaping from the office, which he was not fond of: and he had got his horse, which was a very tangible benefit. And in the future, what might he not hope for? Emancipation from the office altogether; a life of wealth and luxury; horses, as many as he could think of; hunting, shooting, everything that heart could desire; a "place" in the country; a "box" somewhere in Scotland; a fine house in town (which moved him less), and the delightful certa being his own master. All these hung upon his

of pleasing Lucy—nothing more than pleasing a girl. Raymond could not but think with a little scorn of the strange incongruity of mortal affairs, which made all these happinesses hang upon the nod of a bit of a girl; but granting this, which he could not help granting, it was, he had frankly acknowledged, a much easier way of getting all the good things of life than that of laboriously striving for them all his life long—to succeed, perhaps, only at the end, when he was no longer able to enjoy them. "And you *are* fond of Lucy," his mother said. Yes—this too the young man did not deny. He liked Lucy, he "did not mind" the idea of spending his life with her. She was very good-natured, and not bad-looking. He had seen girls he thought prettier; but she was not bad-looking, and always jolly, and not at all "stuck up" about her money; there was not a word to be said against her. And Raymond did not doubt that he would like it well enough were it done. But the doing of it! this was what alarmed him; for, after all, it must be allowed that, more or less, he was doing it in cold blood. And many things were against him on this special day. The wind was cold, and it was charged with dust, which blew into his eyes, making them red, and into his mouth, making him inarticulate. And Emmie clung to his side on one hand, and Jock on the other. He could not shake himself free of these two; when Lucy and he cantered forward, instead of jogging on together discreetly, these two pests would push on after, Jock catching them up in no time, but Emmie, after lumbering along with tolerable rapidity for thirty yards or so, taking fright and shrieking "Ray! Ray!" Raymond concluded, at last, with a sense of relief, that to say

anything on the way there would be impossible. It was a short reprieve for him, and for the moment his spirits rose. He shook his head slightly when they met the party who had gone in the break, and when his mother's anxious eye questioned him. "No opportunity," he whispered as he passed her. The party in the break were covered with dust, and they had laid hold upon all the wraps possible to protect them from the cold. There was shelter in the wood, but still it was cold, and the party was much less gay than the previous one had been, though Mrs. Rushton herself did all that was possible to "keep it up." Perhaps the party itself was not so well selected as on that previous occasion. It was larger, which, of itself, was a mistake, and Bertie, who did not know the people, yet was too great a personage to be neglected, proved rather in Mrs. Rushton's way. He would stray after Lucy, interfering with Ray's "opportunity," and then would apologize meekly for his "indiscretion," with a keen eye for all that was going on.

"Oh, there is no indiscretion," Mrs. Rushton said; "but young people, you know, young people seeing a great deal of each other, they like to get together."

"I see," Bertie said, making a pretence of withdrawal; but from that moment never took his eyes off Lucy and her attendant. The sky was grey, the wind was cold, the yellow leaves came tumbling down upon their plates, as they ate their out-door meal. Now and then a shivering guest looked up, asking anxiously, "Is that the rain?" They all spoke familiarly of "the rain" as of another guest expected; would it come before they had started on their return? might it arrive even before the refection was over? They were all

certain that they would not get home without being overtaken by it. And notwithstanding this alarmed expectation of "the rain," the ham and the chickens were gritty with the dust which had blown into the hampers. It was very hard upon poor Mrs. Rushton, everybody said.

"Come up and look at the waterfall," said Ray to Lucy. "No, don't say where we are going, or we shall have a troop after us. That fellow, that Russell, follows everywhere. Thank heaven he is looking the other way. He might know people don't want him for ever at their heels. Ah! this is pleasant," Ray said, with as good a semblance of enthusiasm as he could muster, when he had safely piloted Lucy into a narrow leafy path among the trees. But Lucy did not share his enthusiasm; she shivered a little as they plunged into the shadow, which shut out every gleam of the fitful sun.

"It is a great pity it is so cold," Lucy said.

"A horrid pity," said Ray, with energy; but then he remembered his *rôle*, "for you," he said; "as for me I am very happy—I don't mind the weather. I could go like this for miles, and never feel the want of the sun."

"I did not know you were so fond of the woods," Lucy said.

"Nor is it the woods I am fond of," said Ray, and his heart began to thump. Now the moment had certainly come. "It is the company I—love."

"Hallo!" cried a voice behind. "I see some one in front of us—who is it? Rushton. Then this must be the way."

"Oh, confound you!" Ray said, between his teeth;

and yet it was again a kind of reprieve. The leafy path was soon filled with a train of people, headed by Bertie, who made his way to Lucy's side, when they reached the open space in which was the waterfall.

"Is not this a truly English pleasure?" Bertie said; "why should we all be making ourselves miserable eating cold victuals out of doors when we should so much prefer a snug cutlet at home? and coming to gaze at a little bit of a driblet of water when we all expect floods any moment from the sky?"

"It is a pity," said Lucy, divided between her natural inclination to assent and consideration for Raymond's feelings, "it is a pity that we have so unfavourable a day."

"But it is always an unfavourable day—in England," Bertie said. He had been "abroad" before he came to Farafield, and he liked to make this fact known.

"I have never been anywhere but in England," said Lucy regretfully.

"Nor I," said Ray defiant.

"Nor I," said some one else with a touch of scorn.

"Authors always travel about so much, don't they?" cried an *ingénue* in a whisper which was full of awe; and this turned the laugh against Bertie. He grew red in spite of himself, and cast a vengeful glance at the young woman in question.

"Ah, you should have seen the day we had at Versailles; such lawns, and terraces, such great trees against the bluest, brightest sky. Miss Trevor, do you know I think you should not venture to ride home."

"Why?" said Ray, with restrained fury, thrusting himself between them.

"I did not suppose it mattered for you, Rushton; but Miss Trevor will get drenched. There, I felt a drop already."

They all looked anxiously at the grey sky. "I should not like Jock to get wet," said Lucy, "I do not mind for myself."

"Come round to this side, you will see the fall better," Raymond said; and then he added, "come along, come along this short way. Let us give that fellow the slip. It is not the rain he is thinking of, but to spoil my pleasure."

"Versailles is something like Windsor, is it not? have you been there lately, Mr. Russell? Oh, we shall soon know. I can always tell when you gifted people have been travelling by your next book," said one of the ladies.

"Suppose we follow Rushton," said Bertie. "He knows all the best points of view."

And once more the train was at Ray's heels. "I think I do feel the rain now," Raymond cried, "and listen, wasn't that thunder? It would not be wise to be caught in a thunderstorm here. Russell, look after Mrs. Chumley, and make for the open; I will get Miss Trevor round this way."

"Thunder!" the ladies cried, alarmed, and there was a rush towards an open space.

"Nonsense," cried Bertie, "there is no thunder," but it was he himself who had prophesied the rain, and they put no faith in him. As for Lucy, she served Raymond's purpose involuntarily by speeding along the nearest opening.

"Jock is always frightened, I must see after him," she cried. Raymond thought she did it for his special advantage, and his heart rose; yet sank too, for now it was certain that the moment had come.

"Stop," he said, panting after her, "it is all right, there is no hurry, I did not mean it. Did you ever see thunder out of such a sky."

"But it was you who said it," Lucy cried.

"Don't you know why I said it? To get rid of those tiresome people; I have never had time to say a word to you all the day."

"Then don't you really think it will rain?" Lucy said doubtfully, looking at the sky. She was much more occupied with this subject than with his wish to say something to her. "Perhaps it would be best to leave the horses, and drive home if there is room?" she said.

"I wish I were as sure of something else as that it will not rain. Stay a little, don't be in such a hurry," said Ray. "Ah, if you only knew how I want to speak to you; but either some one comes, or—I funk it. I am more afraid of you than of the Queen."

"Afraid of—me!" Lucy laughed a little; but looked at him, and grew nervous in spite of herself. "Don't you think we had better wait for the others?" she said.

"I have funked it fifty times; but it does not get any easier by being put off—for if you were to say you would have nothing to do with me I don't know what would happen," said Ray. He spoke with real alarm and horror, for indeed he did know something would inevitably happen. The cutting short c pleasures, the downfall of a hundred hopes. "

seen a great deal of each other since you came home, and we have got on very well."

"Oh, yes," said Lucy, "very well! I think I hear them coming this way."

"No, they are not likely to come this way. I have always got on well with you, I don't know how it is; often I can't get on with ladies; but you are always so jolly, you are so good-tempered; I don't know any one half so nice," said the youth, growing red. "I am not a hand at compliments, and I never was what you call a ladies' man," he continued, floundering and feeling that he had made a mistake in thus involving himself in so many words. "Look here, I think you are the very nicest girl I ever met in my life."

"Oh, no," Lucy said, growing graver and more grave, "I am sure you are making a mistake."

"Not the least a mistake—I like everything about you," said Raymond, astonished at his own fervour and sincerity. "You are always so jolly; and we have known each other all our lives, when we were quite babies, don't you remember? I always called you Lucy then. Lucy—our people seem to think that you and I —don't you think? I do believe we should get on just as well together all our lives, if you were willing to try."

"Oh, Mr. Raymond," cried Lucy distressed, "why, why should you talk to me like this? We are good friends, and let us stay good friends. I am sure you don't in your heart want anything more."

"But I do," cried Raymond piqued. "You think I am too young, but I am not so very young; many a fellow is married before he is my age. Why shouldn't

I want a wife as well as the others? I do;—but Lucy, there is no wife I care for but you."

"Mr. Raymond, we must make haste or we shall be caught in the rain."

"What do I care if we are caught in the rain? But there is not going to be any rain, it was only to get rid of the others," Raymond said breathless; and then he added with almost tragical pleading. "It would be better for me that we should be swept away by the rain than that you should not give me an answer." He put his hand upon her sleeve. "Lucy, is it possible that you do not like me?" he said.

"I like you very well," cried Lucy with tears in her eyes, "but oh, why should you talk to me like this? Why should you spoil everything? You will think after this that we never can be friends any more."

"Then you will not?" said Ray. He was a great deal more disappointed than he had thought he could be, and even the satisfaction of having got it over did not console him. His face lengthened more and more, as he stood opposite to her, barring her passage, leaning against the stem of a tree. "I never thought you would be so hard upon a fellow. I never thought," said Raymond, his lip quivering, "that, after all, you would throw me off at the last."

"I am not throwing you off at the last—it has always been the same," said Lucy; "oh, could not you have left me alone?" she cried half piteous, half indignant. She walked straight forward, passing him, and he did not any longer attempt to bar the way. He followed with his head drooping, his arms hanging limp by his side, the very image of defeat and discomfiture. Poor Ray! he could have cried when he thought

of all he had lost, of all he was losing: and yet there began to gleam over his mind a faint reflection of content in that it was over. This at least was a thing nobody could expect him to repeat any more.

CHAPTER XVI.

DISCOMFITURE.

THE troubles of this interesting picnic were not yet over; there was tea to be made over an impromptu fire from a gipsy kettle, which the young people generally thought one of the most amusing performances of all. And indeed they were all glad of the warmth of the tea, and anxious to get as near as they could to the comforting blaze of the fire, notwithstanding the smoke which made their eyes smart. Mrs. Rushton was busily engaged over this, when Lucy and Ray, one following the other, made their appearance in the centre of the proceedings; the others were dropping in from different sides, and in the important operation of making the tea Mrs. Rushton did not perceive the very evident symptoms of what had happened. It was only when a gleam of firelight lighted up the group and showed her son, standing listless and cast-down, full in the way of smoke, and receiving it as he might have received the fire of an enemy, that the catastrophe became evident to her. She gave him a hasty glance, half furious, half pitiful. Was it all over? Poor Mrs. Rushton! She was obliged to stand there over the fire boiling her kettle, now and then getting a gust of smoke in her face, and obliged to laugh at it, appealed to on all sides, and

obliged to smile and reply, obliged to make believe that her whole soul was absorbed in her tea-making, and in the monotonous question, who took sugar, and who did not? while all the while her mind was distracted with anxiety and full of a hundred questions. Talk of psychometric facts! If Mr. Galton would measure the thoughts of a poor lady, who while she puts the tea in her teapot, and inquires audibly with a sweet smile whether Mrs. Price takes sugar, has all at once six ideas presented to her consciousness: 1st. The discomfiture of Ray; 2nd. The alienation of Lucy; 3rd. Her husband's fury at all these unnecessary expenses, which he had never countenanced; 4th. The horse which would have to be sold again, probably at a loss, having failed like Ray; 5th. How to get all her party home, it being evident that Ray and Lucy would not ride together as they came; and 6th: with a poignant sting that embittered all the rest, of the exultation of her friends and rivals in witnessing her failure. If Mr. Galton could do that, weighing the weight of each, and explaining how they could come together, yet every one keep distinct, it would indeed be worth a scientific philosopher's while. But Mrs. Rushton, it is to be feared, would have scoffed at Mr. Galton. She stood at the stake, with the smoke in her face, and smiled like a martyr. "Sugar? I thought so, but so many people don't take it. I lose my head altogether," cried the poor lady. "Ray, come here, make haste and hand Mrs. Price her tea." Even when Ray did come close to her, however, she could not, encircled as she was, ask him any questions. She looked at him, that was enough: and he in reply slightly, imperceptibly, shook his head. Good heavens! and

there was the girl standing quite unmoved, talking to somebody, after she had driven a whole family to despair! What could girls be made of, Mrs. Rushton thought?

And just at the moment when this fire of suspense, yet certainty, was burning in her heart, lo, the heavens were opened, and a shower of rain came pouring down, dispersing the company, pattering among the trees. Mrs. Rushton was like the captain of a shipwrecked ship, she was the last to leave the post of danger. Though the hissing of the shower forced up a black and heavy cloud of smoke which nearly choked her, she kept her place and shrieked out directions to the others. "The Abbey ruins, the west wing," she cried; there was shelter to be found there. And now it was that Raymond showed how much filial affection was left in him. He snatched a waterproof cloak from the heap and put it round his mother. "You want shelter as much as anyone," he cried. "Oh, Ray!" exclaimed the poor lady as they hurried along together, the last of all the scudding figures under umbrellas and every kind of improvised shelter. She held his arm tight, and he clung closely to her side. There was no more said between them, as they struggled along under the blinding rain. They had both been extinguished, their fires put out, their hopes brought to an end.

As for Lucy, she shrank away among the crowd, and tried to hide herself from Mrs. Rushton's eyes. She was not unconcerned, poor girl. Even the little glimmer of indignation which had woke in her was quenched in her sorrow for the trouble and disappointment which she seemed to bring to everybody. Only this morning she had trembled before Mrs. Stone, and

now it was these other people who had been so kind to her, who had taken so much pains to please her, whom she had made unhappy. What could Lucy do? She did not want any of these men to come into her life. She liked them well enough in their own place; but why should she marry them? This she murmured feebly in self-justification—but her heart was very heavy; and she could not offer any compensation to Ray. He was not poor, he did not come into the range of the will. She gathered her riding skirt up about her and ran to the shelter of the Abbey walls when the shower came on, little Jock running by her side. They had nearly reached that refuge when Jock stumbled over a stone and fell, crying out to her for help. Almost before Lucy could stop, however, help came from another quarter. It was Bertie Russell who picked the little fellow up, and carried him safely into the west wing of the abbey, where the walls were still covered by a roof. "He is not hurt," Bertie said, "and here is a dry corner. Why did you run away, Miss Trevor? I followed you everywhere, for I saw that there was annoyance in store for you." "Oh, no," said Lucy faintly; but it was consolatory to find a companion who would not blame her. He lifted Jock up into a window-seat, and he found her something to sit down upon and take breath, and then he arranged a place for himself between them, leaning against the wall.

"Did you get wet?" Bertie said; "after this you will not think of riding home? I have got a coat which will cover Jock and you; what made them think of a picnic to day? Picnics are always dangerous in this climate, but in October!—Jock, little fellow, take

off your jacket, it is wet, and put on this coat of mine."

"But you will want it yourself," said Lucy, very grateful. Bertie bore the aspect of an old friend, and the people at Farafield, though she had lived in Farafield all her life, were comparative strangers to her. She was moved to laugh when Jock appeared in the coat, which was so much too large for him, a funny little figure, his big eyes looking out from the collar that came over his ears, but comfortable, and easy, and dry. "He has been wrapped in my coat before now," Bertie said. "Don't you remember, Jock, on the Heath when I had to carry you home? Mary expects to have him back, Miss Trevor, when you return to town. I have not told you," continued Bertie, raising his voice, "how Mrs. Berry-Montagu has taken me up, she who nearly made an end of me by that review? and even old Lady Betsinda has smiled upon me; oh, I must tell you about your old friends."

Their dry corner was by this time shared by a number of the other guests, who were watching the sky through the great hole of a ruined window, and had nothing to talk about except the chances of the weather, whether "it would leave off," whether there was any chance of getting home without a wetting, and sundry doubts and questions of the same kind. In the midst of these depressed and shivering people who had nothing to amuse them, it was fine to talk of Lady Betsinda and other names known in the higher society of Mayfair; and Bertie was not indifferent to this, whatever Lucy's sentiments might be.

"I ran over to Homburg for a few weeks," Bertie said. "Everybody was there. I saw Lady Randolph,

who was very kind to me of course. She is always kind. We talked of you constantly, I need not tell you. But you should have seen Lady Betsinda in the morning taking the waters, without her lace, without her satin, a wonderful little old mummy swathed in folds of flannel. Can you imagine Lady Betsinda without her lace?" said Bertie, delighted with the effect he was producing. Mrs. Price and the rest had been caught in the full vacancy of their discussion about the rain. To hear of a Lady Betsinda was always interesting. They edged half consciously a little nearer, and stopped their conjectures in respect to the storm.

"I hear it is worth more than all the rest of her ladyship's little property," Bertie said. "I don't pretend to be a connoisseur, but I am told she has some very fine Point d'Alençon which has never been equalled. Poor old Lady Betsinda! her lace is what she stands upon. The Duchess, they say, declares everywhere that the Point d'Alençon is an heir-loom, and that Lady Betsinda has no right to it; but if she were separated from her lace I think she would die."

"It is very dirty," said Lucy with simplicity. She was not sure that she liked him to call the attention of the others by this talk which everybody could hear, but she was glad to escape from the troublesome circumstances of the moment.

"Dirty!" he said repeating her words in his higher tones. "What is lace if it is not dirty? you might say the same of the poor old woman herself perhaps: but a Duke's daughter is always a Duke's daughter, Miss Trevor, and point is always point. And the more blood you have, and the more lace you have, the more candid

you feel yourself entitled to be about your flannel. A fine lady can always make a fright of herself with composure. She used to hold out a grimy finger to me, and ask after you."

"After me?" Lucy said shrinking. If he would but speak lower, or if she could but steal away! Everybody was listening now, even Mrs. Rushton, who had just come in shaking the rain off her bonnet. She had found Lucy out the moment she entered with that keen gaze of displeasure which is keener than anything but love.

"Yes," said Bertie still rising his voice. Then he bent towards her, and continued the conversation in a not-inaudible whisper. "This is not for everybody's ears," he said. "She asked me always, 'How is little Miss Angel—the Angel of Hope.'"

A vivid colour covered Lucy's face. She was looking towards Mrs. Rushton, and who could doubt that Raymond's mother saw the flush and put her own interpretation upon it? Of this Lucy did not think, but she was annoyed and disconcerted beyond measure. She drew away as far as possible among the little group around them. Had she not forgotten all this, put it out of her mind? Was there nobody whom she could trust? She shrank from the old friend with whom she had been so glad to take refuge: after all he was not an old friend: and was there not, far or near, any one person whom she could trust?

When, however, the carriages came, and the big break, into which Lucy and Emmie and little Jock had to be crowded, since the weather was too broken to make it possible that they could ride home. Bertie managed to get the place next her there, and en-

grossed her the whole way. He held an umbrella over her head when the rain came down again, he busied himself officiously in putting her cloak round her, he addressed all his conversation to her, talking of Lady Randolph, and of the people whom they two alone knew. Sometimes she was interested, sometimes amused by his talk, but always disturbed and troubled by its exclusiveness and absorbing character; and she did not know how to free herself from it. The rest of the party grew tired, and cross, and silent, but Bertie never failed. It was he who jumped down at the gate of the Terrace, and handed her down from amid all the limp and draggled figures of the disappointed merry-makers. They were all too wet to make anything possible but the speediest return to their homes, notwithstanding the pretty supper-table all shining with flowers and lights which awaited them in the big house in the Market-place, and at which the Rushtons tired and disappointed, and drenched, had to sit down alone. Bertie was the only cheerful voice which said good night. He attended her to her door with unwearying devotion. Raymond, who had insisted upon riding after the carriages, passed by all wet and dismal, as the door opened. He put his hand to his hat with a morose and stiff salutation. With the water streaming from the brim of that soaked hat, he passed by stiffly like a figure of despair. And Bertie laughed. "It has been a dismal expedition, but a most delightful day. There is nothing I love like the rain," he said.

CHAPTER XVII.

PHILIP'S DECISION.

SOME one else got down from the break after Lucy had been carefully handed out by Bertie, and followed her silently in the rain and dark to the door. He went in after her, with a passing nod of good night to Bertie, who was somewhat discomfited when he turned round and almost stumbled upon the dark figure of Lucy's cousin, who went in after her with the ease of relationship without any preliminaries. Bertie was discomfited by this apparition, and felt that a cousin was of all things in the world the most inconvenient at this special moment. But he could do nothing but retire when the door was closed, and return to his sister, who was waiting for him. He could not bid Philip begone, or forbid him to interfere. Philip had a right, whereas Bertie had none. But he went away reluctantly, much disposed to grumble at Katie, who awaited him very quietly at the corner of the road. Katie's heart was not so light as usual, any more than her brother's. Why did Mr. Rainy leave her without a word when, following Bertie and Lucy, he had helped her out of the crowded carriage? They had been together almost all the day, and Katie had not minded the rain; why had he left her now, so hastily, without anything but a good night, instead of taking the opportunity of going with her to the White House, as he had done before? Two heads under one umbrella can sometimes make even the mud and wet of a dark road supportable, and Katie had expected this termination

to the day with a little quickening of her heart. But he had put up his umbrella over her, and had left her, following her brother with troubled haste, leaving Katie wounded and disappointed, and a little angry. It was not even civil, she said to herself, and one or two hot tears came to her eyes in the darkness. When Bertie joined her, she said nothing, nor did he. They crossed the road and stumbled through the mud and darkness to the White House, where Katie did not expect a very cheerful reception; for she knew, having her faculties sharpened by regard for her brother's interest, that something had happened to St. Clair, who had gone so abruptly away.

"What does Rainy want going in there at this time of night?" Bertie said, as they slid along the muddy way.

"How should I know?" Katie said sharply. "I am not Mr. Rainy's keeper."

Poor girl, she did not mean to be disagreeable; but it was hard to be deserted, and then have her attention thus called to the desertion.

"Is he after Lucy, too?" said her brother. Oh, how blind men are! not to see that if he were after Lucy he was guilty of the most shameful deceit to another.

"Oh, I suppose you are all after Lucy! she turns all your heads;" Katie cried, with a harsh laugh. Money! that was the only thing they thought of; and what a fool she had been to think that it was possible that anybody could care for her with Lucy in the way!

As for Philip he went in, following Lucy, with scarcely a word to anyone. Mrs. Ford came out as

usual disposed to scold, but she stopped when she saw Philip behind. "I have something to say to Lucy," he said, passing her with a nod, and following Lucy upstairs. This made Mrs. Ford forget that bedtime was approaching, and that it was full time to bolt and bar all the windows. She went into her parlour and sat down, and listened with all the breathless awe that surrounds a great event. What could he be going to say? what but the one thing that would finish all doubt? Mrs. Ford had always been a partizan of Philip. And though she fully valued Lucy's fortune, it did not occur to her that a girl could refuse "a good offer," for no reason at all. That girls do still refuse "good offers," in the very face of the statistics which point out to them the excess of womankind and unlikelihood of marriage, is one of those contradictions of human nature which puzzle the philosopher. Mrs. Ford thought that it was Lucy's first experience of the kind, and though she was anxious she cannot be said to have had much fear. She put out her gas, all but one light, and waited, alive to every sound.

It would be hard to say why it was that Philip Rainy followed Lucy home. He had perceived his mistake the last time they had been together, and the folly of the constant watch which he had kept upon her; it had done him harm, he felt—it had made him "lose caste," which was the most dreadful penalty he could think of. And the result of this conviction was that on being asked late, and he felt only on Lucy's account, to this second party he had made up his mind that this time he would possess his soul in silence. The thought that Lucy's money might go to make some blockhead happy, some fool who had nothing to do

with the Rainys, was no less intolerable to him than ever; but he began to feel that he could not prevent this by interfering with Lucy's amusements, and that on the other hand he lost friends so far as he was himself concerned. Therefore he had carefully kept away from Lucy during the whole day; and—what else was there to do? he fell immediately into the still more serious Charybdis which balanced this Scylla—that is to say he found himself involuntarily, almost unwillingly, by the side of Katie Russell. Not much had been seen of them all the day: they had not minded the threatening of the rain. When the party was starting to go away, they had been found at the very last under the same umbrella, leisurely making their way under the thickest of the trees, and keeping the whole party waiting. Between that moment and the arrival of the break at the Terrace, Philip could not have given a very clear account of what had happened. It had been a kind of troubled elysium, a happiness darkened only by the thought which would occur now and then that it was an unlawful pleasure, and out of the question. He had no right to be happy—at least in that way. What he ought to have done would have been to make himself useful to everybody, to please the givers of the feast, and to show himself the popular useful young man, worthy of all confidence, which he had been hitherto believed to be. This—or else to secure Lucy the heiress-cousin, whom he had the best right to please—to carry her off triumphantly before everybody's eyes, and to show all the small great people, who patronized him, how entirely superior he was to their patronage. But this latter was a step that it would only have been safe to take had he been

entirely assured of its success: and he was not at all assured of its success either on one side or the other. Lucy did not want him, and, he did not want Lucy. This was the fact, he felt; it was a fact that filled him with vexation unspeakable. Why should not he want Lucy? why should he want somebody quite different—a little girl without a sixpence, without interest or connection? Could anything be so perverse, so disappointing! but he could not explain or analyze it. He was forced to confess the fact, and that was all. He did not want Lucy; the question remained should he compel himself to like her, and after that compel her to like him, notwithstanding this double indifference? The titter with which his late appearance had been received when he returned to the party, and when Katie, all shamefaced and blushing had been helped into the over-crowded carriage, amid smiles, yet general impatience, for the rain was coming down, and everybody was anxious to get home—had shown him how far astray from the path of wisdom he had gone. Perhaps this conviction would have worn off had he been by Katie's side crowded up into a corner, and feeling himself enveloped in that atmosphere of her which confused all his faculties with happiness, whenever he was with her, yet was not capable of being explained. But Philip was thrust into an already too large cluster of men on the box, and, crowded there amid the dripping of the umbrellas, had time to turn over in his mind many a troublesome thought. Whither was he going? what had he been doing? was he mad altogether to forget all his interests, to cast prudence behind him and laugh at all that was necessary in his circumstances? The bitter predominated over the

sweet as he chewed the cud of thought, seated on an inch of space among the bags and hampers, and umbrellas of other men, with the confused babble of the break behind him, which was all one mass of damp creatures, under a broken firmament of umbrellas, where a few kept up a spasmodic fire of gloomy gaiety, while all the rest were wrapped in still more gloomy silence. He heard Katie's voice now and then among the others, and was partially wounded by the sound of it; then took himself to task and did his best to persuade himself that he was glad she could talk and get some pleasure out of it, and had not, like himself, dropped into a nether-world of gloom from that foolish Paradise in which they had lost themselves. Much better if she did not care! he said to himself, with a bitter smile, and this thought helped to bring out and increase his general sense of discomfiture. The whole business must be put a stop to, he said, to himself, with angry energy. And this it was which, when the break stopped to set down Lucy, suggested him the step he had now taken. Katie was making her way out between the knees of the other passengers, from the place at the upper end of the carriage, where she had been all but suffocated, when Philip jumped down. He caught, by the light of the lamp, a grin on the countenance of the man who was helping her out, as he said, "Oh, here's Rainy." But for that he would most likely have gone off with her to the White House, and snatched a few moments of fearful joy in the teeth of his own resolution. But that grin drove him wild. He put up his umbrella over her head, and left her abruptly. "I must see Lucy to-night," he said, leaving her there waiting for her brother. It was brutal, he

felt, after all that had passed; but what, unless he wanted to compromise himself utterly, what could he do? He took no time to think, as he followed his cousin and her companion through the rain.

But when he had followed Lucy silently upstairs, he did not quite know what to do or say next. Lucy stopped on her way to her room to change her habit, and looked round upon him with surprise. "Is it you, Philip?" she asked, wondering, then added, "I am glad to see you, I have scarcely seen you all day;" and led the way into the pink drawing-room. Philip sat down as he was told, but he did not know why he had come there, or what he wanted to say.

"The party—has been rather spoilt by the rain," she said.

"I suppose so," he answered, vaguely. "Did you like it? Sometimes one does not mind the rain."

"I minded it very much," said Lucy, with a sigh; then, feeling that she was likely to commit herself if she pursued this subject, she added, "I am rather glad the time is over for these parties; they are—a trouble. The first one is pleasant—the others—"

Then she paused, and Philip's mind went back to the first one, and to this which was just over. He had not enjoyed the first, except the end of it, when he took Katie home. And this he had enjoyed, but not the end. His imagination escaped from the present scene, and he seemed to see Katie going along the muddy road, under his umbrella, but without him. What could she think? that he had abandoned her? or would she care whether he abandoned her or not?

"That depends," said Philip, oracularly, and, like Lucy, with a sigh; though the sigh was from a dif-

ferent cause. Then he looked at her across the table. She had not seated herself, but stood in her habit, looking taller and more graceful than usual, more high-bred too; for the girls whom Philip was in the habit of meeting did not generally indulge in such an expensive exercise as that of riding. He looked at her with a sort of spectator air, as though balancing her claims against those of the others. "I should not wonder," he said, "if you would like your season at Farafield to be over altogether, and to be free to go back to your fine friends."

"Why should you say my fine friends—" said Lucy, with gentle indignation: and then more softly, but also with a sigh, for she had been left for a long time without any news of one at least of them, whom she began to think her only real friend—"but indeed you are right, and I should be very glad to get back—all was so quiet there."

"So quiet! If you are not quiet in Farafield, where should you know tranquillity?" cried Philip, with a little mock laugh. He felt that she must intend this for a joke, and in his present temper it seemed to him a very bad joke.

Lucy looked at him with a momentary inquiry in her eyes—a question which had a great deal of wistfulness and anxiety in it. Could she tell her troubles to him? He was her kinsman — who so well qualified to advise her? But then she shook her head, and turned away from him with an impatient sigh.

"What is it you mean?" he said, with some excitement. His mind was in a turmoil, which he could not tell how to still. He felt himself at the mercy of his

impulses, not knowing what he might be made to do in the next five minutes. It was the merest "toss-up" what he would do. Never had he felt himself so entirely irresponsible, so without independent meaning, so ready to be hurried in any direction. He did not feel in him the least spark of love for Lucy. He felt impatient with her, wroth with all the world for making so much of her, indignant that she should be preferred to—others. But with all that he did not know what he might find himself saying to her next moment. The only thing was that it would not be his doing, it would be the force of the current of Fate, on which he felt himself whirling along—to be tossed over the rapids or dashed against the rocks, he did not know how or when. "What do you mean?" he repeated; "you look mysterious, as if you had something to tell—what is it. I have seen nothing of you the whole day. We have been nominally at the same party, and we are cousins, though you don't seem to remember it much, and we once were friends; but I have scarcely seen you. You have been absorbed by other attractions, other companions."

"Philip!" said Lucy faltering and growing pale. Was he going to desert her too?

"Yes!" he said, "it is quite true. I am one that it might have been supposed likely you would turn to. Natural feeling should have made you turn to me. I have always tried to stand by you; and you have got what would have enriched the whole family—all to yourself. Nature pointed to me as your nearest; and yet you have never," he said, pausing to give additional bitterness to his words, and feeling himself caught in an eddy, and whirling round in that violent stream

without any power of his own, "never shown the slightest inclination to turn to, or to cling to, me."

"Indeed, indeed, Philip—" Lucy began.

"Why should you say indeed, indeed? What is indeed, indeed? Just what I tell you. You have never singled me out, whoever might be your favourite. All your family have been put at a disadvantage for you; but you never singled me out, never showed me any preference—which would have been the best way of setting things right."

There was a look of alarm on Lucy's face. "If it is my money, Philip, I wish you had the half of it," she said. "I wish I could put it all away, and stand free."

"It is not your money," he said, "it is your——" And here he stopped short, and looked at her with staring troubled eyes. The eddy had nearly whirled him away, when he made a grasp at the bank, and felt himself, all at once, to recover some mastery of his movements. He did not know very well what he had been going to say: "your——" what? love? It was not love surely. Not such a profanation as that. He looked at her with a sudden suspicious threatening pause. Then he burst again into a harsh laugh. "What was I going to say—I don't know what I was going to say?"

"What is the matter with you, Philip? I am your friend and your cousin; there is something wrong—tell me what it is." Lucy came up to him full of earnest sympathy, and put her hand on his shoulder, and looked with hectic anxiety in his face. "Tell me what it is," she said, with a soft tone of entreaty. "I

am as good as your sister, Philip. If I could not do anything else, I could be sorry for you at least."

He looked up at her with the strangest staring look, feeling his head go round and round; and then he gave another loud sudden laugh, which alarmed her more. "I'll tell you," he said, "yes! I'll tell you. It is the best thing I can do. I was going—to make love to you. Lucy—love!—for your money."

She patted him softly on the shoulder, soothing him as if he had been a child confessing a fault. "No, no, Philip, no. I am sure you were not thinking of anything so unkind."

"Lucy!" he said, seizing her hand, the other hand. She never even removed the one which lay softly, soothing him, on his shoulder. "You are a good girl You don't deserve to have a set of mean hounds round you as we all are. And yet—there are times when I feel as if I could not endure to see you give your fortune, the great Rainy fortune, to some—other fellow. There! that is the truth."

"Poor Philip!" she said, shaking her head, and still moving her hand softly on his shoulder with a little consolatory movement, calming him down. Then she added with a smile, "You need not be in any trouble for that, for I am not going to give it to any —fellow. I never can by the will."

"I don't put any trust in that," he said, "no one would put any trust in that. You will marry, of course, and then—it will be as Providence ordains, or your husband. He will take the command of it, and it will be his, whatever you may think now."

"I do not think so," [illegible] icy with a smile, "and,

besides, there is no such person. You need not trouble yourself about that."

Then Philip wrung her hand again, looking up at her in such deadly earnest, that it took from him all sense of humour. "Lucy, if I could have fallen in love with you, and you with me, that would have been the best thing of all," he said.

"But you see it has not happened, Philip; it is not our fault."

"No, I suppose not," he said gloomily with a sigh, "it is not my fault. I have tried my best; but things were too many for me." Here he got up, shaking off unceremoniously Lucy's hand. "Good night! you must be damp in your habit, and I've got wet feet," he said.

Mrs. Ford lay in wait for him as he came downstairs, but he only said a hasty good-night to her as he went away. His feet were wet, and he realised the possibility of taking cold, which would be very awkward now that the duties of the school in Kent's Lane had recommenced. Nevertheless, instead of going home, he crossed the road, and went stumbling among the mud towards the White House. What did he want there? he had a dim recollection of his umbrella, but it was not his umbrella he wanted. And Philip was fortunate, though, perhaps, he did not deserve it. A light flashed suddenly out from the White House as he reached the door. Bertie had taken his sister back, and had gone in, where he met but a poor reception. And Katie had come out to the door to see her brother depart. When she saw the other figure appearing in the gleam of light from the door, she gave a little shriek of mingled pleasure and malice. "It is Mr.

der she is not ashamed of herself! and a fine company of draggle-tails you must have been when you came home. If I were Mr. Rushton, I should give my wife a piece of my mind. I would not allow, nor countenance, for a moment, such silly goings on."

"Mrs. Rushton did not do it for herself, Aunt Ford."

"Oh, don't tell me! Do you suppose she'd do it if she didn't like it? Do you ever catch *me* at that sort of folly? I almost wished you to get something that would disgust you with such nonsense; but nothing will convince you, Lucy, nothing will make you see that it is your money, and only your money—"

How glad Lucy was when the meal was over, and she could escape upstairs! how thankful to have that pink drawing-room to take refuge in, though it was not a lovely place! Jock came with her, clinging to her hand. Jock's eyes were bigger than ever as he raised them to his sister's face, and she, on her part, clung to him too, little though he was. She held Jock close to her, and gave him a tremulous kiss when they entered that lonely little domain in which they spent so much of their lives. When the door was closed and everything shut out, even the voices of the household which lived for them, yet had nothing to do with them, this room represented the world to Lucy and Jock. Even with the household, they had no special tie—not even a servant attached to them, as they might have had if they had been brought up like the children of the rich. But they had been just so brought up that even the consolation of a kind nurse, an attendant of years, was denied to them, in the dismal isolation of that class which is too little raised above its servants to venture to trust them—

which dares not to love its inferiors, because they are so very little inferior, yet will not bow to anything as above itself. They had nobody accordingly. Lucy's maid even had been sent away. Jock had no old nurse to take refuge with; they clung together, the most forlorn young pair. "It is your money, and only your money," said the little boy, "as Auntie Ford says?"

"Oh Jock, how can I tell? I wish you and I had a little cottage somewhere in a wood, or on an island, and could go far away, and never see any one any more!"

And Lucy cried; her spirit was broken, her loneliness seemed to seize upon her all at once, and the sense that she had no one to fall back upon, nobody to whom her money was not the inducement. This was an idea which in her simplicity she had never conceived before. She had thought a great deal of her money, and perhaps she had scarcely formed any new acquaintances without asking herself whether they wanted her help, whether it would be possible to place them upon the privileged list. It had been her favourite notion, the thing that occupied her mind most; but yet Lucy thinking so much of her money, never thought that it was because of her money that people were kind to her. It had seemed so natural, she was so grateful, and her heart was so open to all that made a claim upon it. And she and Jock were so lonely, so entirely thrown upon the charity of those around them. Therefore she had never thought of her wealth as affecting anyone's opinion of herself. Had any of her friends asked for a share of it, represented themselves or others as in need of it, Lucy would have listened to them with delight, would have given with

both hands and a joyful heart, at once gratifying herself and doing her duty according to her father's instructions. But that her friend's should seek her because she was rich, and that one man after another should startle her youth with proposals of marriage because she was rich— this was an idea that had never entered into Lucy's mind before. "Your money, and only your money:" the words seemed to ring in her ears, and when Jock asked wondering if this were true, she could not make him any reply: oh, how could she tell? oh, that she had wings like a dove, that she might fly away, and hide herself and be at rest! and then she cried. What more could a girl so young and innocent do?

Jock stood by her side, by her knee, and watched her with large serious eyes, which seemed to widen and widen with the strain and dilation of tears; but he would not cry with Lucy. He said slowly in a voice which it took him a great deal of trouble to keep steady. "I do not think that Sir Tom——"

"Oh," cried Lucy, putting him away from her with a burst of still warmer tears. "Sir Tom! You don't know, Jock. Sir Tom is unkind too."

Jock looked at her, swallowing all his unshed tears with an effort; he looked at her with that scorn which so often fills the mind of a child, to see the want of perception which distinguishes its elders. "It is you that don't know," said Jock. He would not argue the question. He left her, shaking as it might be the dust off his feet, and took the Heroes from the table, and threw himself down on his favourite rug. He would not condescend to argue. But after he had read a dozen pages, he paused and raised himself upon his elbows, and looked at her with fine contempt. "You!"

he said, "you wouldn't have known the gods if you had seen them. You would have thought Heré was only a big woman. What is the good of talking to you?"

Lucy dried her eyes in great surprise; she was quite startled and shaken by the reproof. She looked at the little oracle with a respect which was mingled at once with awe and with gratitude. If he would but say something more! But, instead of uttering any further deliverance, he dropped his elbows again, and let himself down into the rug, and became altogether unconscious at once of her presence and her difficulties, indifferent as the gods themselves to the sorrows of mortal men.

It is not to be supposed, however, that, after all this, Lucy could settle with much tranquillity to her book, which was the history which she had been reading so conscientiously. When St. Clair had withdrawn, he had taken with him the history book (it was Mr. Froude's version of that oft-told tale), which was as easy to read as any novel, and Lucy was left with her old text-book, which was as dry as facts could make it. She could not read, the book dropped upon her knee half a dozen times in half an hour, and the time of study was nearly over when some one came with a soft knock to the door. It was Miss Southwood who came in with a shawl round her, and her close old-fashioned bonnet tied over her ears. She came in somewhat breathless, and plunged into a few set phrases about the weather without a moment's pause.

"What a dreadful day for your pic-nic! I could not help thinking of you through all that rain. Did you get very wet, Lucy? and you were riding too.

You must have got everything spoiled that you had on."

"Oh no, for we drove home; but it was not very pleasant."

"Pleasant!—I should think not. It was very foolish—what could you expect in October? Mrs. Rushton must have had some object. What did she mean by it? Ah, my dear, you were a great deal safer in Maria's hands; that is a scheming woman," cried Miss Southwood. Then she touched Lucy on the arm, and made signs at Jock on the rug, "wouldn't you?—" she said, making a gesture with her hand towards the door, "for I want to speak to you—by yourself."

"You need not mind Jock," said Lucy; "he is always there. When he has a book to read he never cares for anything else."

"Oh! I wouldn't trust to his not caring—little pitchers—and then you never know when they may open their mouths and blurt everything out. Come this way a little," Miss Southwood said, leading Lucy to the window, and sinking her voice to a whisper. "I have a note to you from Maria; but my dear I wouldn't give it you without saying—you must not take it by the letter, Lucy. For my part I don't agree with it at all. It ought to have been sent to you last night; but I am Frank's aunt as well as Maria. I have a right to my say too; and I don't agree with it, I don't at all agree with it," Miss Southwood said anxiously. She watched Lucy's face with great concern while she opened the note, standing against the misty-white curtains at the window. The countenance of little Miss Southwood was shaded by the projecting eaves of her bonnet, but it was very full of anxiety, and the

interval seemed long to her though the note was short. This is what Mrs. Stone said—

"Dear Lucy,

"On thinking over the extraordinary proposal you made yesterday, I think it right to recommend you to dismiss all idea of my nephew, Frank St. Clair, out of your mind. Your offer is very well meant, but it is impossible, and I trust he will never be so deeply wounded as he would be by hearing of the compensation which you have thought proper to suggest. I don't wish to be unkind, but it is only your ignorance that makes the idea pardonable; I forgive, and will try to forget it; but I trust you will take precautions to prevent it from ever reaching the ears of Mr. St. Clair.

"Your friend,
"MARIA STONE."

This letter brought the tears to Lucy's eyes. "I did not mean to be unkind. Oh, Miss Southwood, you did not think I wanted to insult anyone!"

"It is all nonsense; of course you never meant to insult him," said Miss Southwood, anxiously. "It is Maria who is cracked, I think. Money is never an insult—unless there is too little of it," she added, cautiously. "Of course if you were to offer a gentleman the same as you would give to a common man— But my opinion, Lucy, is that Frank himself should be allowed to judge. We ought not to sacrifice his interest for our pride. It is he himself who ought to decide."

"I do not want to give too little. Oh!" said Lucy,

"if you knew how glad I would be to think it was all gone! I thought at first it would be delightful to help everybody—to give them whatever they wanted."

"But if you give all your money away, you will not be a very great heiress any more."

"That was what papa meant," said Lucy. "He thought because my uncle made it, I should have the pleasure of giving it back."

Miss Southwood looked at her with a very grave face. "My dear," she said, "if I were you I would not speak of it like this, I would not let it be known. As it is you might marry anybody; you might have a duke, I verily believe, if you liked; but if it is known that the money is not yours after all, that you are not the great heiress everybody thinks, it will spoil your prospects, Lucy. Listen to me, for I am speaking as a friend: now that you are not going to marry Frank, I can't have any motive, can I? I would not say a word about it till after I was married, Lucy, if I were in your place. It will spoil all your prospects, you will see."

She raised her voice unconsciously as she gave this advice, till even little Jock was roused. He got upon his elbows and twisted himself round to look at her. And the stare of his great eyes had a fascinating effect upon Miss Southwood. She turned round, involuntarily drawn by them, and said, with a half shriek, "Good Lord! I forgot that child."

As for Lucy she made no reply; she only half understood what was meant by the spoiling of her prospects, and this serious remonstrance had much less effect upon her, than words a great deal less weighty. "Will you tell me what I am to do?" she said, simply;

"and how much do you think it should be, Miss Southwood? Gentlemen spend a great deal more than women. I will write at once to my guardian."

"To your guardian!" Miss Southwood cried; and this time with a real though suppressed shriek, "you will write to your guardian—about Frank?"

Here Lucy laughed softly in spite of herself. "You do not think I could keep thousands of pounds in my pockets? and besides it has all to be done—like business."

"Like business!" Miss Southwood was unreasonably, incomprehensibly, wounded; "write to your guardian," she said, faintly; "about Frank? manage it like business? Oh, Lucy, I fear it was I that was mistaken, and Maria that understood you, after all!"

Why did she cry? Lucy stood by wondering, yet troubled, while her visitor threw herself into a chair and wept. "Oh!" she cried, "I that thought you were a lady! but what is bred in the bone will come out. To offer a favour, and then to expose a person—who is much better born and more a gentleman than yourself!"

This new blow entirely overwhelmed Lucy. She did not know what to reply. Whatever happened she began to think, she must always be in the wrong. She was not a lady, she had no delicacy of feeling; had not Mrs. Russell said so before? Lucy felt herself sink into unimaginable depths. They all despised her, or what was worse, thought of her money, shutting their hearts against herself, and she was so willing, so anxious that they should have her money, so little desirous to get any credit from it. After a while she laid her hand softly upon her visitor's shoulder. "Miss

Southwood," she said, in her soft, little, deprecating voice, "if you would only think for a moment, I am only a girl, I do not keep it myself. They only let me have a little, just a little when I want it. It is in the will that my guardians must know, and help me to decide. Dear Miss Southwood, don't be angry, for I cannot—I cannot do anything else. It is no disgrace not to have money, and no credit or pleasure to have it," Lucy said, with a deep sigh; "no one can know that so well as me."

"You little goose," said Miss Southwood, "why it is *everything* to you! who do you think would have taken any notice of you, who would have made a pet of you, but for your money? I mean, of course," she said, with a compunction, seeing the effect her words produced, "except steady old friends like Maria and me."

Poor little Lucy had grown very pale; her limbs trembled under her, her blue eyes got a wistful look which went to the heart of the woman who had not, so opaque are some intelligences, intended to be unkind. Miss Southwood, even now, did not quite see how she had been unkind. It was as plain as daylight to her that old John Trevor's daughter had no claim whatever upon the consideration of ladies and gentlemen, except on account of her money; which was not to say that she might not, however, have friends in a humbler class, who might care for her, for herself alone. As for Lucy she dropped down upon a chair, and said no more; her heart was as heavy as lead. Wherever she turned, was not this dismal burden taken up and repeated, "Your money, and your money alone."

"Oh, no, it does not matter. Must I write to Mr. Chervil, or must it all be given up?" said Lucy, faintly, "and Mr. St. Clair—?"

"If you think so much of him why, why can't you make up your mind and have him?" cried his aunt. "It is not anything so much out of the way, when one knows all the circumstances: for you will not really have such a great fortune after all. Lucy, would it not be much better—?"

Lucy shook her head; she did not feel herself capable of words, and Miss Southwood was about to begin another and an eloquent appeal, when there was once more a summons at the door, and some one was heard audibly coming up stairs. A minute after Mrs. Rushton appeared at the drawing-room door. She was flushed and pre-occupied, and came in quickly, not waiting for the maid; but when she saw Miss Southwood, she made a marked and sudden pause.

"I beg your pardon. I thought I should find you alone, Miss Trevor, at this early hour."

"I am just going," Miss Southwood said; and she kissed Lucy affectionately, partly by way of blowing trumpets of defiance to the rival power. "Don't conclude about what we were speaking of till I see you again; be sure you wait till I see you again," she said, as she went away. Mrs. Rushton had not sat down, she was evidently full of some subject of importance. She scarcely waited till her predecessor had shut the door.

"I have come to say a few words to you which I fear will scarcely be pleasant, Miss Trevor;" she said.

Lucy tried to smile, she brought forward her softest

easy-chair with obsequious attention. She had something to make up to Raymond's mother. "I hope nothing has happened," she said.

"I will not sit down, I am much obliged to you. No, nothing has happened, so far as I know. It is about yourself I wanted to speak. Miss Trevor, you afforded a spectacle to my party yesterday, which I hope never to see repeated again. I warned you the other night that you were flirting—"

Lucy's countenance, which had been full of alarm, cleared a little, she even permitted herself to smile. "Flirting?" she said.

"I don't think it a smiling matter. You have no mother," said Mrs. Rushton, "and we are all sorry for you—in a measure, we are all very sorry for you. We know what the manner of fashionable circles are, at least of some fashionable circles, are. I have always said that to put you, with your antecedents, into the hands of a woman like Lady Randolph! But I have nothing to do with that, I wash my hands of that. The thing is that it will not do here."

Lucy said nothing. She looked at her new tormentor wistfully, begging for mercy. What had she done?

"Yesterday opened my eyes," said Mrs. Rushton, with a heat and energy which flushed her cheeks. "I have been trying to think you were all a nice girl should be. I have been thinking of you," said the angry woman with some sudden natural tears, "as one of my own. Heaven knows that is what has been in my mind. A poor orphan though she is so rich, that is what I have always said to myself—poor thing! I will try to be a mother to her."

"Oh, Mrs. Rushton, you have been very kind. I know it seems ungrateful," cried Lucy with answering tears of penitence, "but if you will only think—what was I to do?—I don't want to marry anyone. And Mr. Raymond is— I had never thought—"

There was a momentary pause. Mrs. Rushton had a struggle with herself. Nature had sent her here in Raymond's quarrel, eager to avenge him somehow, and her mind was torn with the desire to take his part openly, to declare herself on her boy's side, to overthrow and punish the girl who had slighted him. But pride and prudence came, though tardily, to her assistance here. She stared at Lucy for a moment with the blank look which so often veils a supreme conflict. Then she said with an air of surprise, "Raymond? Do you mean my son? I cannot see what he has to do with the question."

Lucy felt as a half-fainting patient feels when the traditionary glass of cold water is dashed in her face. She came to herself with a little gasp of astonishment. What was it then? except in the matter of refusing Ray her conscience was void of all offence. She looked at Mrs. Rushton with wonder in her wide open eyes.

"I do not know," Mrs. Rushton continued, finding her ground more secure as she went on, "what you mean to insinuate about my boy. *He* is not one that will *ever* lead a girl too far. No, Lucy, that is a thing that will never happen. It is when one of your town set appears that you show yourself in your true colours; but perhaps it is not your fault, perhaps Lady Randolph thinks that quite the right sort of behaviour. I

never attempt to fathom the conduct of women of her class."

At this Lucy began to feel an impulse if not of self-defence, yet of resistance on her friend's behalf. "Please do not speak so of Lady Randolph," she said with mild firmness; "if you are angry with me—I do not know why it is, but if you are angry, I am very sorry, and you must say what you please of me—but Lady Randolph! I think," said Lucy, tears coming to her eyes, "if I am not to trust Lady Randolph, I may as well give up altogether, for there seems no one who will stand by me! of all the people I know."

"Oh, Lady Randolph will stand by you, never fear; so long as you keep your fortune, you are sure of Lady Randolph," cried Mrs. Rushton with vehemence. "But as for other friends, Miss Trevor, your behaviour must be their guide."

"Why do you call me Miss Trevor," cried Lucy, her courage giving way, "what have I done? If it is Raymond that has set you against me, it is cruel. I have done nothing to make my friends give me up," the poor girl cried, with mingled shame and indignation; for the suggestion of unfit behaviour abashed Lucy, and yet, being driven to bay, she could not but make a little stand in her own defence.

"Raymond again!" cried Mrs. Rushton with an angry laugh, "why should you wish to mix up my son in it? It is not Raymond, as I have said before, that would lead any girl to make an exhibition of herself —but the moment you get with one of your own set! I call you Miss Trevor, because I am disappointed, bitterly disappointed in you. I thought you were a different girl altogether, nice, and modest, and gentle,

and—but I have my innocent Emmie to think of, and I will not have her grow up with such an example before her eyes. Therefore if you see a difference in me you will know the cause of it. I have treated you like a child of my own. I have made parties for you, introduced you everywhere, and this is my reward. But it is always so; I ought to console myself with that; those we are kind to are exactly those that turn upon us and rend us. Oh! what is that, are you setting a dog upon me? You ungrateful, ill-mannered——"

There was no dog; but Jock, unobserved by the visitor, had been there all the time, and as Mrs. Rushton grew vehement his attention had been roused. He had raised himself on his elbows, listening with ears and eyes alike, and by this time his patience was exhausted; the child was speechless with childish fury. He took the easiest way that occurred to him of freeing Lucy. He seized the long folds of Mrs. Rushton's train which lay near him in not ungraceful undulations, and winding his hands into it, made an effort to drag her to the door. The alarm with which she felt this mysterious tug, which very nearly overset her balance, got vent in a shriek which rang through the whole house. "It is a mad dog!" she cried, with a rush for the door, carrying Jock along with her. But no mortal thread could stand such an appendage. Mrs. Rushton's dress was slight in fabric, and gave way with a shrieking of stuff rent asunder, and stitches torn loose. Lucy flew to the rescue, catching her little champion in her arms with outcries of horror and apology, yet secret kisses of gratitude and consolation to the flushed and excited child. It was at this moment that Mrs. Ford,

having put on her purple silk, sailed into the room, her pace scarcely accelerated by the cries she heard, for she owed it to herself to be dignified in the presence of strangers whatever happened. She paused a moment at the door, throwing up her hands. Then, "For shame Jock! for shame!" she cried loudly, stamping her foot, while Lucy kneeling down, kissing, and scolding, and crying in a breath, endeavoured to unloose the little passionate hot hands. "She should let Lucy alone!" cried Jock with spasmodic fury. He would have held on like the dog for which his enemy took him, through any amount of beating. "I do not wonder after the way in which he has been brought up," cried Mrs. Rushton, panting and furious as she got free.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE CUP FULL.

JOCK was not allowed to come down to dinner that day, and Lucy, refusing to leave him, sat with the culprit on her knee, their arms clasped about each other, their hot cheeks touching. "Oh, if we could go away! if we only had a little hut anywhere, you and me, in the loneliest place, where we should never see any of these people more," Lucy cried; and Jock, though he was still in a state of wild excitement, calmed down a little, and began to think of a desolate island, that favourite fancy of childhood. "I should not be so clever as Hazel was—for he was a fellow that knew everything; but couldn't I build you a house,

Lucy?" the little fellow said, his wet eyes lighting up at the thought. He had read "Foul Play" not long before. Jock was not fond of the modern novel; but he made an exception in favour of Mr. Reade, as what boy of sense would not do? With this forlorn fancy they consoled themselves as they sat dinnerless, clinging to each other—a lonely pair. Mrs. Ford, half alarmed at the success of her punishment, which was so much greater than she expected, for, to do her justice, she wanted only a lawful submission, and not to deprive the little delicate boy of a meal, came upstairs several times to the door to ask if Jock would submit; but he would not say he was sorry, which was what she required. "Why couldn't she let my Lucy alone? I would do it again," he said, turning a deaf ear to all Mrs. Ford's moral addresses. All this time Lucy held him close, kissing his little tear-wet cheek, and crying over him, so that, perhaps, his firmness was not wonderful. "You should not encourage him, Lucy," said Mrs. Ford. "Come down to your dinner. It is a shame to encourage a little naughty boy; and you can't go without your dinner." "If you had but one in all the world to stand up for you, only one, would you go and forsake him?" cried Lucy, with floods of hot tears. And then Mrs. Ford went downstairs very uncomfortable, as are all enforcers of domestic discipline, when the culprits will not give way. Against this kind of resistance the very sternest of household despots fight in vain, and Mrs. Ford was not a household despot, but only an ignorant, well-meaning woman, driven to her wit's end. If she were unkind now and then, it was not that she ever meant to be unkind. She grew more and more uncomfortable as time after

time she returned beaten to the dinner-table downstairs, which she, herself, could not take any pleasure in, because these two troublesome young persons were fasting above.

This was a mournful meal in the house. Ford himself satisfying his usual good appetite in the natural way, was fallen upon by his wife, and, so to speak, slaughtered at his own table. The dainty dishes she had prepared specially for Lucy were sent away untouched, and the good woman herself ate nothing. She did nothing but talk all through that meal of Jock's misdemeanour. "And Lucy spoils him so. She will not listen to me. It is bad for the child—dreadfully bad for the child. He ought to be at school, knocking about among other boys. And instead of that, she sits and cries and kisses him, and goes without her dinner. It's enough to kill the child," cried Mrs. Ford, "at his age, and a delicate boy, to eat nothing all day."

"Then why don't you let him come down and have his dinner," said Ford, his mouth full of a furtive morsel.

"Oh, you never—you never understand anything! Am I the one to ruin that child's morals, and make him think he can do what he likes, for the sake of a dinner? Not till he gives in and says he is sorry," said Mrs. Ford, pushing her plate away with angry emphasis, "but it is Lucy that makes me unhappy," she said, "anybody—anything else for the sake of that boy."

And it cannot be denied that little Jock, at least, heard the rattle of the plates and dishes as they were cleared away with a sinking of the heart; but he

would not give in. Lucy was less moved by it. She had something of that contempt for dinners which is an attribute of the female mind, and she was worn with excitement, cast down and discouraged in every way. She said to herself that she could not have swallowed anything; the mere suggestion seemed to bring a lump in her throat. She wanted to see nobody, to turn her face to the wall, to "give in" altogether. Lucy could not have told what vague mysterious despair was implied in the idea of "giving in," but it seemed the end of all things, the lowest depth of downfall. Notwithstanding this wild desperation and desire to turn her back upon all the world, it was a very welcome interruption when Katie Russell knocked softly at the door, and came in with a subdued eagerness and haste which betrayed that she had something to tell. Katie was not like her usual self any more than Lucy was. There was a soft flush upon her face, an unusual excitement and brightness in her eyes. She came in rapidly, with an "Oh, Lucy——!" then stopped short when she saw Jock, and the lamentable air of the little group still clinging close together, whose mournful intercourse she had interrupted. Katie burst forth into a little laugh of excitement. "What is the matter with you?" she said. Jock slid out of Lucy's arms, and Lucy rose up from her chair at this question. They were glad enough to come to an end of the situation, though they had both made up their minds to accept no comfort. And when Lucy had told the story, Katie's amusement and applause did her friend good in spite of herself. "Bravo, Jock!" Katie cried, with another laugh, which her own personal excitement and need of utterance had no small

share in; and she was so much delighted by Mrs. Rushton's discomfiture that both sister and brother began to feel more cheerful. "Oh, how I should have liked to see her!" said Katie. And then her own affairs, that were so urgent, rushed into her mind with a fresh suffusion of her face and kindling of her eyes. Lucy was not great in the art of reading looks, but she could see that there was something in Katie's mind that was in the most urgent need of utterance—something fluttering on her very lips that had to be said. "I have got free for the day," she said, with a little quaver in her voice. "Let us go somewhere or do something, Lucy, I cannot stop still in one place. I have something to tell you—"

"I saw it directly in your face—what is it? what is it?" Lucy said. But it was not till she had gone to her room to get her hat, where Katie followed her, that the revelation came. "Will you have me for a relation?" the girl said, crossing her hands demurely, and making a little curtsey of pretended humility; and then natural emotion regained its power, and Katie laughed, and cried, and told her story. "And you never guessed!" she said; "I thought you would know in a moment. Didn't you notice anything even yesterday? Ah, I know why? you were thinking of your own affairs."

"I was not thinking of any affairs," said Lucy, with a sigh; "I was tormented all day: but never mind—tell me. Philip! he has always seemed so solid, so serious."

"And isn't this serious!" said Katie. "Oh, you don't half see all that it means. Fancy! that he should

turn his back upon all the world, and choose me, a girl without a penny!"

"But—all the world? I don't think Philip had so much in his power. What did he turn his back upon? But I am very glad it is you," Lucy said. Still her face was serious. She had not forgotten, and she did not quite understand the scene of last night.

Katie grew very serious too. "I want to speak to you, Lucy," she said. "We are two girls who have always been fond of each other; we always said we would stand by each other when we grew up. Lucy, look here, if you ever *thought of* Philip—if you ever once thought of him—I would cut off my little finger rather than stand in his way!"

Hot tears were in her eyes; but Lucy looked at her with serious surprise, wondering, yet not moved. "I don't know what you mean," she said.

"Oh, but you must know what I mean, Lucy! Perhaps you are not clever; but everybody always said you had a great deal of sense. And you *know* you are the greatest prize that ever was. How can you help knowing? And Philip is one that you have known all your life. Oh, Lucy, tell me, tell me true! Don't you think I would make a sacrifice for *him?* It would break my heart," cried the girl, "but I would sacrifice myself and Bertie, too, and never think twice—for *him!* Answer me, answer me true; between you and me, that have always been fond of each other. Lucy!" cried Katie, seizing her hands with sudden vehemence, "answer me as if we were two little girls at school. Did you ever think of Philip? Would you have had him if—if he had not liked me?"

Lucy drew her hands away with an energy which was violence in her. "I think you are all trying to drive me out of my senses. I! think of Philip or anyone! I never did, I never will," she cried, with sudden tears. "I don't want to have anyone, or to think of anyone, as you say. Will you only let me alone, all you people? First one and then another; and not even pretending," the poor girl cried with sobs, "that it is for me."

"I am not like that, Lucy," Katie said, in mournful tones; for why should Lucy cry, she asked herself, if it were not that she had "thought of" Philip. "I am fond of you, and I know you would make anyone happy. It is not only for your money. Oh, I know, I know," Katie cried; "what a difference it would make to him if he married you: and what is pride between you and me? Only say you care for him the very least in the world—only say—. Lucy," cried Katie, solemnly, "if it was so, though it would break my heart, I would make poor Bertie take me off somewhere this very day, to New Zealand or somewhere, and not leave a word or a trace, and never see either of you more."

Lucy had recovered a little spirit during this last assault upon her. She had got to the lowest depth of humiliation, she thought, and rebounded. The emergency gave her a force that was not usual to her. "I once read a book like that," she said; "a girl went away, because she thought another girl cared for the gentleman. Don't you think that would be pleasant for the other girl? to think that she had made such an exhibition of herself, and that the gentleman had been cheated into caring for her? I—I am sure I never

made any exhibition of myself," Lucy cried, with rising warmth. "One is to me just like another. I am very willing to be friends if they will let me alone; but as for Philip! I am glad you like him," she said, recovering her serenity with an effort. "I am very glad you are going to marry him. And, Katie!" here a sudden thought flashed into the mind of the heiress. If it ever could be made to appear natural to give money away, surely here was the occasion. She clapped her hands suddenly, with an unaffected simple pleasure, which was all the more delightful that it was a flower plucked, so to speak, from the very edge of a precipice. "They cannot say anything against that," she cried; "it will be only like a wedding present." And satisfaction came back to Lucy's heart.

"Oh, never mind about the wedding present—so long as you like it, Lucy—that is the best," cried the other; and then Katie's confidences took the more usual form. "Fancy, I have not seen him yet," she said; "I got the letter only this morning, and I answered it, you know. Don't you think a girl should give an answer straight off, and not keep him in suspense? for I had always, always, you know, from the very beginning, from that night when he came in—don't you recollect? Now I see you never can have thought of Philip, Lucy, for you don't recollect a bit! It was a beautiful letter; but it was a funny letter, too. He said he could not help himself. Oh, I understand it quite well! Of course he did not want, if he could have helped it, to marry a girl without a penny in the world."

"Does that matter, when he is fond of you?" Lucy said.

"Ah! it is only when you are awfully rich that you can afford to be so disinterested," cried Katie. "Naturally, he did not want to marry a girl with nothing. And you may say what you like, Lucy; but for a man to have a chance of you and like me the best! There, I will never say another word; but if it makes me vain can I help it? To choose me when he had the chance of you!"

"He never had the chance of me," cried Lucy, with returning indignation. "What do you all take me for, I wonder? Am I like something in a raffle, in a bazaar? Can people take tickets for me, and draw numbers, and everyone have a chance? It is not like a friend to say so. And there is no one, if you fail me, Katie, no one that I can trust."

"You may trust me, to my very last breath," cried Katie with indescribable fervour. And Lucy felt, with a softening sensation of relief and comfort, that surely here was a stronghold opening for her: Katie and Philip. She could trust in them if in nobody else. Philip had been the one honest among all the people round her. He had loved somebody else, he had not been able to pretend that it was Lucy he loved. She thought of the scene of the previous night with an uneasy mixture of pleasure and pain. How strange that they should all think so much of this money, which to Lucy conveyed so little comfort! But Philip had escaped the snare. And now she thought there could be no doubt that she had found a pair of friends whom she could trust.

Jock all this time waited downstairs; but he was not impatient. Jane, the housemaid, charged with a sandwich which Mrs. Ford herself had prepared, way-

laid him on the landing, and Jock wanted small persuading. He was a boy who liked sandwiches; and to have his own way and that too, was enough to reconcile him to a little waiting. He had just time to dispose of it while the girls lingered; and it was very good, and he felt all the happier. He sallied forth a little in advance, as was his habit when Lucy was not alone, his little nose in the air, his head in the clouds. He did not pay any attention to the secrets the others were whispering; why should he? At eight the superiority of sex is as acutely felt as at any other age. Jock was loyal to his sister through every fibre of his little being; still Lucy was only a girl when all was said.

It was a beautiful day after the yesterday's rain. The blue of the sky had a certain sharpness, as skies are apt to have when they have wept much; but the air was light and soft, relieved of its burden of moisture. It was Katie who was the directress of the little party, though the others were not aware of it. She led them through the streets till they reached a little ornamental Park into which the High Street fell at one end. Then suddenly in a moment, Katie gave her friend's arm a sudden pressure. "Oh, Lucy," she cried, "have a little feeling for *him:* you have so much for me, have a little for *him*," and disengaging herself, she ran on and seized Jock's hand, who was marching serenely in front. Lucy astonished, paused for a moment not knowing how to understand this sudden desertion—and found her hand in the hand of Bertie Russell, who had appeared she could not tell from whence.

"This is good fortune indeed," he said, "what a

happy chance for me that you should take your walk here!"

Lucy felt her heart flutter like a bird fallen into a snare. It was not that she was frightened for Bertie Russell, but it was that she had been betrayed in the very tenderness of her trust. "Katie brought us," she said gravely. Katie who was stimulating Jock to a race, had got almost out of hearing, and the other two were left significantly alone. Lucy felt her heart sink; was there another scene like that of yesterday to be gone through again?

"Katie is perhaps more kind to me than she is to you, Miss Trevor," said Bertie, "she knew I wanted to tell you—various things; and she did not realise, perhaps, that it would be so disagreeable to you."

This troubled Lucy in her sensitive dislike to give pain. "Oh," she said, "Mr. Bertie, indeed I did not mean to be rude."

"You could not be rude," he said with an audible sigh. "Those who have not the gift to please, have only themselves to blame. I wanted to call, but your old lady does not like me, Miss Trevor. I heard this morning from Mrs. Berry-Montagu. Did I tell you she had taken me up? She has been in Scotland in her husband's shooting quarters, and she says Sir Thomas Randolph is off to the East again."

"To the East!" Lucy said; what did it mean? for a moment the sight seemed to go out of her eyes, the world to swim round her. A great giddiness came over her; was she going to be ill? she did not understand what it was.

"Yes," said Bertie's voice, quite unconcerned—and, even in the midst of this wonderful mist and darkness,

it was a consolation to her that he did not seem to perceive her condition. "When that mania of travel seizes a man there is no fighting against it. Mrs. Montagu says that Lady Randolph is in despair."

"I should think she will not like it," Lucy said. The light was beginning slowly to come back. She saw the path under her feet, and the shrubs that stood on either hand, and Bertie by her side whom she had been so alarmed to see, but whom she thought nothing of now. What did it mean? she was too much confused and confounded in all her faculties to be able to tell. And she asked no questions. That was why Sir Tom had not written, had not taken any notice. Lucy had thought herself very wretched, abandoned by heaven and earth this morning, but how different were her sensations now! An invisible prop had been taken away, which had held her up without her own knowledge. She felt herself sink down to the very dust, her limbs and her courage failing alike. And all the time Bertie's voice went on.

"I have been wandering about the town, renewing my acquaintance with it, and making notes. May I tell you about what I am going to do, Miss Trevor? Perhaps it will only bore you? Well, if you will let me—I am about beginning my second book; and your advice did so much for me in the first. I know how much of my success I owe to you."

"Oh no, no, Mr. Bertie," said Lucy, "you only say so. I never gave you any advice, you don't owe anything to me."

"Perhaps not," he said with a smile. "Perhaps the Madonna on the mast does not save the poor I lian fisherman from the storm. You may think, if

are a severe Protestant, that she has nothing to do with it; but he kneels down and thanks our Lady when he gets on shore, and you must let me thank the saint of my invocation too."

Lucy made no reply. She did not understand what he meant by all these fine words, and if she had understood she did not care. What did it matter? His voice was not much more to her than the organ playing popular tunes in the street beyond. The two sounds made a sort of half ludicrous concert to her ears. She heard them, and heard them not, and went on in a maze, still giddy, not knowing where she was going, keeping very still to command herself. Gone to the East! all that she thought had been over. He had gone to Scotland, from whence he was to write, and she to him, if she wanted advice or anything—that was what he had said—anything! And he had written to her, but not for a long time. And now he was going away again, going away perhaps for ever. This was what was going on in Lucy's mind while Bertie spoke. She had no feeling about Bertie now, or about the betrayal of her trust by his sister. What did it matter? Sir Tom was going—going to the East. Sometimes she felt disposed to grasp at Bertie's arm to steady herself, and sometimes there came over her an almost irrestrainable impulse to break in, to say "To the East! do you mean that he is really, really going to the East?" It was only instinct that saved her, not anything better. When the words came to her lips, she became vaguely conscious that he was talking about something else.

Bertie, on his part, was too much occupied with his own idea to perceive that Lucy was preoccupied

also. He thought indeed that she was listening to him with a sort of interested absorption, unresistingly —which indeed was true enough. Katie and Jock sped on before, leaving him full space and leisure for his suit. She was altogether at his mercy, walking downcast by his side, listening timidly, too shy to make any reply. It flashed across his mind that it was just thus that he would describe a girl who was going to yield and make her lover happy—make him happy! Yes, there could be no doubt of that; she would make him happy, as very few had it in their power to do. The bliss Lucy could bestow would be substantial bliss. What unappreciated efforts Bertie made! the hero in a novel was never more eloquent. He compared Lucy to all manner of fine things. And she heard him, and heard him not. It was very hard upon Bertie. But when, beginning to feel discouraged by her silence, he went back upon the recollections of her life in Grosvenor Street, Lucy woke up from her abstraction. Even Mrs. Berry-Montagu restored her interest. "May I send a message from you when I write to her?" he said. "She is always inquiring after you. There are none of your acquaintances that do not take an interest in you—unless, perhaps, it might be an old man about town like Sir Tom."

"Sir Thomas is always kind—there is no one so kind," cried Lucy, with a little excitement; "if you say he does not take any interest, it is because you don't know."

"Oh, I did not mean any harm; but pardon me if I cannot bear to see a man like Sir Tom come near you, Miss Trevor. People show their feelings in different ways. Mine—you don't much care to hear about

mine—take an old-fashioned form. There are people who are not worthy to touch the hem of your dress."

"I don't know what you mean, Mr. Russell. Sir Tom is better, far better, than most of the people I know, and as for me I am not sacred, I don't know why anyone should think of the hem of my dress."

"But you are sacred to me," said Bertie, feeling that the moment was come. "Pardon me if I go too far. But what else can a man say when he has put himself under you as his saint, as his guiding star, since ever he began to be worth anything? that is only since I knew you, Lucy. Of course I know I am not half, nor a quarter, good enough for you. But ever since you began to come to Hampstead you know what you have been to me; you have inspired me, you have made me what I am. You thought, or the Randolphs thought, that is was presumption to put your name upon my book—"

"Oh, Mr. Bertie, why do you bring that up again—it is all over and past. You made people talk of me and laugh at me, and put me in the papers. It was dreadful! but it is all over, and I don't want to hear of it any more."

"It was the best I had," said Bertie, with not unnatural indignation. "It was all I had, and queens have not scorned such offerings; but, if you do not care for that, you might care for a man's devotion, Lucy—you might care for—"

"Oh, Mr. Bertie, don't, please don't say any more."

"I know how to take an answer," he said, "I won't persecute you as that cub did yesterday; but I must know whether you mean it really—whether you know what I mean. Lucy! you must let me call you so just

once more—is it only shyness? are you frightened, don't you understand? or do you know that, when I offered my book to you, I offered, like all the poets, my heart, my life, my——"

"Lucy," said Jock, suddenly rushing upon her, rushing between them and pushing, with the mere force of his coming, the impassioned suitor away, "Katie has met Philip, and they don't want me. What are you doing, talking so long? Philip looks so queer, I don't know what is the matter with him. And I want to go home. I hate a walk like this—there is no fun in it. And I want to go home; come!" cried the child, hanging on to her skirts. Bertie looked at him with a vindictive stare of rage and disappointment. There was not another word to say.

CHAPTER XX.

WHEN THE NIGHT'S DARKEST IT'S NEAREST THE DAWNING.

NOT a word could Lucy say all the way home. She was flushed and agitated, her hand burning, which grasped Jock's, her eyes dim with moisture. When she got home she made no reply to Mrs. Ford, who came out to meet her; but, dropping Jock's hand, ran up-stairs to the quiet of that still, pink sitting-room, where the "Heroes" still lay open on the rug, and her chair stood as she had thrust it back. The afternoon was fading into twilight, the lamps were lighted outside, throwing a strange onesided sort of chilly illumination into the room, though mingled with the daylight. Lucy shut the door behind her, as if it

had been the door of a hermitage. No one would come to disturb her there, unless it might be Mrs. Ford, to persuade her to go down to tea. How could Lucy go and sit at the homely table, and listen to all the potterings of the pair, over their bread and butter? She could not do it. Agitation had driven away all trace of appetite; she wanted nothing, she thought, but to be let alone. She sat down upon the sofa, and gazed out wistfully at the bit of blue sky that appeared between the white curtains. There was not so much as that bit of blue sky in all Lucy's world. Not one true to her, not one who did not see something in her quite different from herself. Her other suitors had startled Lucy; but this last application for her love had driven her to bay. She did injustice to poor Bertie in the vehemence of her feelings. Though he had spoken in high-flown language, he was not in reality worse than the others, nor had he a worse meaning. They all of them had known that Lucy was the most desirable thing within their reach. They had recognized with the truest sincerity that she could make them happy, that no one could make them so happy; they had aspired to her with all the fervour of heartfelt sentiment; and Bertie had not been behind the others in this very earnest and unquestionable feeling. Why then should he have made her so angry —he, and not the others? She could not tell; but she came in, feeling a universal sickening of distrust, which took all the heart out of her. She sat down dismally upon her pink sofa. Nobody to trust to. What fate in the world could be so terrible? The cold gleaming of the lamps outside were a kind of symbol of all her life had to sustain it:

of the outside light of the world, but no warmth of a household lamp or hearth within. She sat down forlorn, and began to cry. "Nobody, nobody!" said poor Lucy. She did her best to survey the situation calmly, dismal as it was. What was she to do? All her friends had forsaken her; but she had Jock left, and those duties which her father had trusted to her hands. She must go on with her trust whatever happened. She kept hold of a kind of reality in her life, by grasping at this resolution. Yes, she would do her duty; whoever failed she would hold on, she would do what her father had said. It was still something that was left in life.

It seemed to Lucy, all at once, as if a new light had come upon this duty. It was in love to her as well as in justice to others that her father had charged her to give it back. Oh, if it could all be given back —got rid of, her life delivered from it, and she herself left free like other girls! Lucy's sky seemed to her all gloomy and charged with clouds, great rolling masses of vapour, clouds of wealth, which had risen out of the earth, and only by dispersion to earth again would leave her free. She understood what her father meant—rain to relieve the clouds, tears to relieve the heat in her forehead, the gasp in her throat. But at present the clouds were hanging suspended over her, hiding all the blueness of the heavens, and her tears were few and hot, not enough to relieve either head or heart. Nobody faithful—not one! the women conspiring, even Katie, the men paying false court, making false professions, and everyone maligning the other, accusing the others of that falsehood which they knew to be in themselves. "Not one," she repeated to her-

self; "not one," and then a cry was forced out of Lucy's poor little wrung heart. "Not even Sir Tom!" she said aloud, with a sudden torrent of tears. Was this, though she did not know it, the worst of all? Certainly the name opened those floodgates against which her passion of wounded feeling had been straining: her tears came in a violent thunder shower. "Not even Sir Tom!" It was the hardest of all.

Something stirred in the dimness behind her. She had taken no notice of anything in the room when she came in, blind with those tears which she was not able to shed until she found that talisman. Some one seemed to make a step forward. Was she then not alone? or was it her imagination only which made her heart jump? No, for Lucy's imagination never went so far as this. It could not have created the voice which said, with that familiar tone, "What has Sir Tom done?" with a touch of emotion and a little touch of laughter in it, just over her head, as she sat and sobbed. The sudden cry with which Lucy replied told all her little secret, even to herself. She got up and turned round, transformed, her innocent lips apart, her eyes all wet and blinded, yet seeing— But what she saw was not very clear, a big shadow, a something that was very real, not false at all, a figure that somehow—why? Lucy could not tell—put the world right again, and stopped the giddiness, and made the ground solid under her feet. She put out her hands, yet more in meaning than in action, half groping, half appealing.

"Who is it? is it *you?*" she said.

"Lucy, what has Sir Tom done to make you —?" he asked, taking her hands into his. Was it I

that she did not feel any longer this most poignant stab of all? She could not in the least recollect what it was. She thought of it no more. It sailed away from her firmament as a cloud sails on a steady breeze.

"Oh, I am so glad you have come home," she cried.

Sir Tom was touched almost to tears. No one could see it, but he felt the moisture steal into the corners of his eyes. This was not a congenial place for him this *bourgeois* room, nor had this little girl, in her simplicity, any right to greet him so. And Sir Thomas had by no means made up his mind, when he came to see his aunt's *protégée*, notwithstanding her heiress-ship, that he was going to give up his freedom and independence, and subject himself to all manner of vulgar comments for her sake. But these words sealed his fate. He could no more have resisted their modest, simple appeal, so unconscious as it was, than he could have denied his own nature. He did what he had done when he left her, but with a very different meaning; he stooped over her and kissed her seriously on the forehead; he had done it half paternally, half in jest, when he went away.

"Yes, my dear, I have come home," with a little quiver in his voice Sir Thomas said; and after an interval, "I think my little Lucy must have missed me. What is the matter? who has been vexing you? and even Sir Tom: did I do something amiss too?"

"We will speak of that after," Lucy said, with a relief which was beyond all comprehension. She

could talk again, her tongue was loosened and her heart opened. She had not been able to confide in anyone for so long, and now all at once some door seemed opened, some lock undone. "It does not seem anything now you are here. I am sure it was right, quite right," she cried, with a sob and a laugh together. "I knew *underneath* that it must be right all the time."

Sir Tom did not insist upon knowing what it was; he made her sit down, and placed himself by her, still holding her hands.

"But something has been wrong," he said. "My little girl is not in such trouble without some cause. Mrs. Ford tells me there was a disturbance this morning, and that Jock was naughty, and you went out without any dinner. Come tell me! you can trust in me."

Had she not heard over and over again that he was not to be trusted? Had she not believed, with the deepest sting of all, that Sir Tom had failed her? Lucy did not remember. "Oh, yes," she said, from the bottom of her heart. It seemed so easy to tell everything now. And then the whole pent-up stream poured forth. The trouble of the morning could not be disclosed without leading to all the rest. Sometimes she cried as she spoke, sometimes almost laughed, the fact that he was there taking all the sting out of her troubles. And as for Sir Tom, though there was sometimes a gleam of indignation in him, he felt more disposed to laughter than to tears. Lucy's troubles were very simple and transparent to him; she might have known that her fortune would tempt everybody—though the fact that she had not

known, and that even proofs had not convinced her, was the thing which most profoundly touched Sir Tom's experienced heart.

"You have had a pretty set of guardians," he said; "these are all people that have had the charge of you, Lucy?" He did not at the moment recollect that Lady Randolph had the charge of her also, and had instantly, from the ends of the world, summoned himself. Then he said, "Lucy, listen to me; this is the sort of thing you will be subject to, I fear, wherever you go; and I don't know what you will think of me when you hear what I am going to say. I know you have a grievance against me which you are to tell me by and by——"

"No, oh no," cried Lucy, fervently; "I know now it must have been a mistake."

He smiled, but the smile was not that of mere triumph. He was old enough to be touched by his own unexpected success, to be grateful to the young creature who had resisted all other claims upon her regard, to give her heart so unreservedly to him; and there was even more than this, a something which, at the moment, was very like love, which probably was the most passionate sentiment he was likely to entertain now, after all his experiences, for anyone. He was "very fond of" Lucy. He understood her simple goodness, and regarded it with that soft paternal enthusiasm which a beloved child excites in us; and he was grateful to her, and deeply touched by her choice of himself, a choice of which he could have very little doubt. "And you have heard a great deal of harm of me—all these good people have said some-

thing. They have said Tom Randolph was not a man to be your friend."

"I have not believed them," said Lucy. "I know you better. I have not believed a word."

"But you might have believed, Lucy. You must listen to me now, my dear. I have not been a good man, as you give me credit for being. I cannot say of myself that I am fit to be the companion of a young, pure, good girl."

"Oh, Sir Tom!" Lucy cried in indignant protestation. Words would not serve her to say more.

"Yes," he said, shaking his head regretfully. "It is quite true. I who know myself best confess it to you; but still there is a little truth left in me. I am going to enter the lists with all these others, Lucy. I am going to ask you to set yourself free from all of them by marrying me."

"*Marrying—you*, Sir Tom!"

"Yes! me. People will say I am a fortune-hunter like the rest."

Lucy could not bear even this censure suggested by himself. She had been looking at him seriously all the time, showing her emotion only by the changing colour of her face, which, indeed, it was not very easy to see. Now she made a hasty movement of impatience, stamping her foot upon the ground, "No!" she said. "No! they would not dare to say that. It would not be true."

"It would be true so far that, if you were a little girl without any fortune, I should not dare to ask you to marry me, for I am a poor man; but not any worse than that. Will you marry me, Lucy?" Sir Thomas said. He let her hands go free, and held out his own.

He was not afraid like the others. It cannot even be said that he had much doubt what the answer would be.

Lucy had not shrunk from him, nor showed any appearance of timidity. She sat quite quietly looking at him, her eyes showing through the gathering twilight, but not much else. There was a little quiver about her mouth, but that did not show.

"Must I be married at all?" she said in a very low voice.

This chilled Sir Thomas a little—for he had expected a much warmer reply. He had thought it possible that she would fling herself upon his breast, and receive his proposal with the same soft enthusiasm with which she had welcomed his coming. He forgot how young she was, how childlike, and how serious and dutiful in every new step she had to take.

"Yes," he said with a little jar in his voice, "unless you are always to be running the gauntlet through a string of suitors. You like me, Lucy?"

"Oh, Sir Tom, yes!"

"And I—" he stopped the other words on his own lips; he would be honest and no more; he would not say love, which indeed was a word he knew he had soiled by ignoble use, and employed ere now in a very different sense. "And I," he said, "am very fond of you."

There was a pause. He never could have thought he would have felt so anxious, or that his heart would have beaten as it was beating. Through the twilight he could see Lucy's serious eyes, not stars, or anything superlative, but honest tranquil eyes, with a little curve of thought over each brow, looking at him. She was

anxious too. At last she said with a soft sigh, "I wish, I wish I knew—"

"What, Lucy?"

"What is right," she said with a little hurrying and faltering of the words, "what papa would have liked. It is so hard to tell. He left me a great many instructions for different things, but not a word, not a word about this."

"In this, you may be sure, he wished your heart to be your guide," said Sir Thomas, "and so, even if you decide against me, do I——"

"How could I decide against you, Sir Tom?" she said with a soft reproach. "I am thinking, only thinking, what is right."

What was Sir Thomas to do?—he began to feel that his position was almost ludicrous, sitting here, suspended upon Lucy's breath, waiting for her answer. This was not the triumphant position which he had occupied ten minutes ago, when he felt himself to be the Deliverer, coming with acclamations to set everything right. Whether to be very angry and annoyed, or to laugh at this curious turning of the tables—to be patient and wait her pleasure, or to betray the half-provoked, half-amused impatience he began to feel —he did not know.

The matter was decided in a way as unlooked for as was the crisis itself. Suddenly, without any warning, the door bounced open and Mrs. Ford stood in the doorway, in a dark vacancy, which showed her darker, substance like a drawing in sepia. "Lucy," she said solemnly, "do you mean to starve yourself to death, all to spite me? I have not had a moment's peace all day since you went out without your dinner.

Sir Thomas Randolph, if you have got any influence with her, *make* her come down to her tea."

"I will, Mrs. Ford," he said.

"There's a roast partridge," said Mrs. Ford with real emotion. "Jock, bless him, has eat up the other. Oh, Lucy, if you do not want to make me wretched, come down to your tea!"

"I am coming," said Lucy. She rose up, and so did her companion—Mrs. Ford in the doorway looking on, not seeing anything but the two shadows, yet wondering and troubled in her mind to think of the neglect which had left them there without any lights. "I will give it to that Lizzie," said Mrs. Ford internally; but there was something in the air which she did not understand, which kept her silent in spite of herself.

Then Lucy put her hand into Sir Thomas's hand, which was no longer held out for it. "If you think it is the best," she said very low in her serious voice, "you have more sense than I have. Tell me what to do. Do you think it is the best?"

Sir Thomas had been confused by the strange and unexpected position; he had been prepared for an easy triumph, and at the moment of coming it had eluded him; and when he had almost made up his mind to the reverse, here was another surprise and change. But Lucy's voice again touched a deeper chord than he was conscious of. He was affected beyond description by the trust she placed in him. He took the hand she gave him within his own. "Lucy," he cried with a thrill of passionate feeling in his voice, "as God shall judge between us, I believe it is the best; but not, my dear, unless you feel that it will be happy for you."

"Oh!" cried Lucy with a soft breath of ease and

content which scarcely seemed to form words, yet shaped into them, "Happy! but it was not *that* I was thinking of," she said.

He drew her hand within his arm. It was triumph after all, but of a kind original, surprising, with a novelty in it that went to his heart, touching all that was tender in him. He led her down stairs into Mrs. Ford's parlour, with his mind in a confusion of sympathy and respect and pleasure—and carved her partridge for her, and ate half of it with a sacramental solemnity, and a laugh in his eyes, which were glistening and dewy. "You see," he said, addressing the mistress of the house, who looked on somewhat grimly, "it is not because I am greedy, but because she will not eat without company. She wants company. She does not care for the good things you get for her, unless you will share them too."

"I declare!" cried Mrs. Ford, "I never thought of that before. Lucy, is it true?"

"It is quite true," said Sir Thomas gravely, with always the laugh in his eyes. "She cares for nothing unless she can share it. Has she eaten up her half honestly? You see I know how to manage her. Will you let me marry her, Mrs. Ford?"

"Sir Thomas!" cried the pair in consternation in one voice. He had come so opportunely to their assistance that they had quite forgotten he was a wolf in the fold. Ford thrust up his spectacles off his forehead, and let the evening paper (which had come in Sir Thomas's pocket) drop from his hands, and as for Mrs. Ford she gasped for breath.

But the two at the table took it very quietly. Lucy looked up with eyes more bright than her eyes

had ever been before, and a colour which was very becoming, which made her almost beautiful; and Sir Thomas (who certainly was a real gentleman, with no pride about him), comforted them with friendly looks, without the slightest appearance of being ashamed of himself. "Yes," he said. "We both think it will answer so far as we are concerned. You are her oldest friends. Will you let me marry her, Mrs. Ford?"

The question was answered in a way nobody expected. There raised itself suddenly up to the level of the table, a small head supported upon two elbows, rising from no one knew where. "Sir Tom was the one I always wanted," said little Jock.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE GUARDIANS.

SIR THOMAS RANDOLPH got up next morning with his usual good spirits a little heightened by something, he could not immediately recollect what. The doubt lasted only for a moment, but perhaps his happiness was not so instantaneously present to his mind as a new vexation would have been. But on his second waking moment, he jumped up from his bed and laughed. The red October sunshine was shining into his room; he went and looked out from his window upon the noble trees in his park, stretching far away in ruddy masses, all golden and red with the frosty, not fiery, finger (pardon, dear poet!) of Autumn. As far as he could see (and a great deal further) the land was his; but, oh! poor acres! how heavy with mort-

gages! how stiff with borrowings! heavier and stiffer than the native clay, of which there was too much about Farafield; but that was all over, this red, russet October morning; the house had a mistress, and the land was free.

Was it a wrong to Lucy that he thought of this so soon? He laughed, at first, at the astounding position in which he suddenly recollected himself to stand, as a betrothed man, a happy and successful lover; and then there suddenly rushed into his mind the idea that the change would make him entirely independent, safe from all duns, free of all creditors, his own master on his own land. When, however, he went downstairs and ate his solitary breakfast near the fire in the great panelled room, with its old tapestries and family portraits, the noblest room in the county, though as good as shut up for so many years—there came quite sweetly and delightfully into Sir Tom's mind the idea, not of the hospitalities which now were possible, but of a little serious countenance, with two mild blue eyes, following his looks with a little strain of intelligence, not quite, *quite* sure all at once of his meaning, but always sure that he was right, and soon finding out what he meant, and lighting up with understanding all the more pleasant for the first surprise of uncertainty. When this little vision glanced across him, he put down his newspaper, which he had taken up mechanically, and smiled at it over the table. "Give me some tea, Lucy," he said, with an amused, exhilarated, almost excited realisation of what was going to be. "I beg your pardon, Sir Thomas?" said the solemn butler, just coming in; and then, will it be believed? Sir Tom, who had knocked about the world

for so many years, Sir Tom, who had touched the borders of middle-age, and gone through no small amount of experiences—blushed! He laughed afterwards and resumed his paper—but that there had come over, between his big moustache and his quite unthinned and plentiful locks, a delightful youthful suffusion of warmth and colour, it was impossible to deny. He felt it quite necessary to sound a trumpet forthwith, so much tickled was he with his own confusion, and pleased with himself. "Williams, I am going to be married," he said. Williams was a man who had been all over the world with his master, who had himself gone through various transformations, had been a saucy valet, and an adventurer, and a dignified family servant by turns, and was not a man to be surprised at anything; but he stopped short in the middle of the room, and said "Indeed, Sir Thomas!" in a tone more like bewilderment than any that ever had been heard from him before. "Did you ever hear such a joke?" said the master, thinking of his own blush, that unparalleled circumstance; and "It do indeed, Sir Thomas," Mr. Williams gravely replied.

However, after this serious revelation there were more serious matters in hand. Sir Thomas had decided that he would go to Mr. Rushton in the morning, who was the real guardian, and with whom in any case he would have to do;—whether it would be necessary in everything to observe the ordinances of the will, which Lucy, he knew, had declared her determination to stand by, and ask the consent of all that board of guardians to whom old Trevor had given the power of hampering and hindering Lucy's marriage was a thing he had not made up his mind

upon; but with Mr. Rushton, at least, he must have to do. He drove into Farafield through the keen air of the bright, chill, sunshiny morning with great courage and confidence. It might be said that he was fortune-hunting too; but if he would receive a certain advantage from the heiress, it was certain that he had something to offer on his side which no woman would despise. To put her at the head of the noblest old house and the most notable family in the county was a balance on his side which made Lucy's advantage no more than was desirable. Mr. Rushton, however, presented the air of a man perturbed and angry when Sir Thomas entered his office. A letter was lying on the table before him, the sight of which, it must be allowed somewhat discomposed even Sir Tom. Was it Lucy's handwriting? Had she taken it upon her to be the first to communicate to her legal guardian the change in her fortunes which had happened? If this had been the case, no doubt Sir Tom would have adapted himself to it, and concluded by finding it quite natural and becoming that a girl in so exceptional a position should take this upon herself. But in the meantime he felt just a little annoyed, and disconcerted too.

"I see you are busy," Sir Thomas said.

"No—not so much busy—I am always busy at this hour, and shall be I hope as long as my strength lasts; but no more than usual. The truth is," said Mr. Rushton with a suppressed snarl, "I'm provoked—and not much wonder if you knew all."

Sir Thomas looked at the open letter in spite of himself. "May I ask if I have anything to do with your annoyance?" he said.

"You!" the lawyer opened his eyes wide, then laughed angrily. "No, I don't suppose it can be you. She is not quite so silly as that."

"Silly!" echoed Sir Thomas, "perhaps it will be better to tell you at once without any circumlocution what my errand is. I have come to tell you, Rushton, a piece of news which may surprise you—that I have made an offer to Miss Trevor, and that she has accepted me."

Mr. Rushton said not a word; he was altogether taken aback. He stood with his mouth open, and his eyebrows forming large semi-circles over his eyes, and stared at Sir Thomas without a word.

"This naturally," said the hero of the occasion with a laugh, "makes it—not quite safe—to criticise Miss Trevor to me."

"Accepted—*you!*" He could scarcely get his breath, so bewildered was he. "Do you mean to say that you—want to marry Lucy Trevor?" Mr. Rushton said.

"Yes! in common with various other people," said Sir Thomas, "some of whom you may have heard of; but the speciality in my case is, that she has accepted me. I thought it my duty to come to you at once as Miss Trevor's guardian. I hope you do not object to me—you have known me long enough—as a suitor for her. I am rather old for her perhaps—but otherwise, I think——"

"Accepted—*you!*" the lawyer repeated; and then he gave utterance to a hard laugh. "She is young, but she is a cool one," he said. "Accepts you one minute, and writes [illegible] a provision for an old lover, I su[illegible] [illegible]e she has cast

off for your sake—the minx! She *is* a cool one," Mr. Rushton said.

"You forget—what I have this minute told you, Rushton."

"No, pardon me, I don't forget!" said Lucy's guardian. "She is only a girl as you may say, but it seems to me she is fooling us all. Look at that—read that," he said, tossing the open letter at Sir Thomas, who, for his part, took it, how could he help it? with a little tremble of apprehension. This is what he read:

"Dear Mr. Rushton.

"I think I have found some one else that is all that is required by papa's will. This time it is a gentleman, and as he is not married, and has no children, it will not require so much. He is very clever, and has a good profession; but his health is not good, and he wants rest. This is just what papa would have wished, don't you think so? Two or three thousand pounds would do, I think—and I will tell you everything about it and explain all, if you will come to me, or if I can go and see you. I have written to Mr. Chervil too.

"Sincerely yours,
"LUCY TREVOR."

"Did you ever hear anything like it?" said the lawyer, exasperated. "If there is still time, you will thank me for letting you know, Sir Thomas. Who can tell who this person is? And the moment you appear, no doubt much better worth the trouble—"

"Must I again remind you of what I

Thomas repeated. "This has reference, so far as I can see, to a condition of the father's will, which Miss Trevor has very much in her mind."

"She has told you of it? There never was so mad a proviso. They have 'a bee in their bonnet,' as the Scotch say. And I've got to stand by and see a fine fortune scattered to the winds! That girl will drive me mad. I lose my head altogether when I think of her. The old man was always an eccentric, and he couldn't take the money with him. You know a man doesn't feel it, what he does by his will; but that any living creature, in their senses, should throw away good money! I believe that girl will drive me mad."

"*A la bonne heure*," said Sir Thomas, "you have nothing to do but transfer your charge to me."

"Ah! you'll put a stop to it? I see. A husband can do a great many things; that is what I thought, that was my idea when—There are a great many things to be taken into consideration, Sir Thomas," Mr. Rushton said, recovering his self-possession. "Your proposal is one to be treated respectfully, but nevertheless in my ward's interests——"

"I think those interests have been considerably risked already," said Sir Thomas gravely. "I do not think they are safe here; she is with people who do not know how to take care of her."

"According to the will, Sir Thomas—"

"But it is not according to the will, that she should have no guardianship at all, but be approached by every youth that happens to cross her path."

Mr. Rushton winced; if his wife schemed was it his fault? "Ah! I have heard something of that," he

said. "Some young fellow who followed her from town; it must be put a stop to."

"It is put a stop to," said Sir Thomas, "Miss Trevor has, as I tell you, accepted me."

"That is the most effectual way certainly, isn't it?" Mr. Rushton said discomfited. He rubbed his hands ruefully, and shifted from one foot to another. "It is a very serious question. I must go into it fully before I can pretend to say anything; you have a fine property, but it is heavily burdened, and a good position, an excellent position; but with her fortune my ward has a right to look very high indeed, Sir Thomas," the lawyer said.

"You will not promise me your support?" said Sir Thomas. "I have a hard task before me, I understand, and the consent of a great many people to secure. And how about Miss Trevor's letter," he said with a twinkle in his eye, "she will ask me what you said."

Mr. Rushton grew crimson once more. "It is out of the question," he cried, "the girl is mad, and she will drive me mad. Two or three thousands! only two or three thousand pounds! the other day she made away with six thousand—I declare before heaven she will bring down my gray hairs—no, that's not what I mean to say. But you can't treat money in this way, Sir Thomas, you can't do it, it will make me ill, it will give me a fever, or something. The girl does not know what she is doing. Money! the one thing in the world that you can't treat in this way."

"But the will permits it?" said Sir Thomas with a fictitious look of sympathy.

"Oh, the will, the will is mad too. I dare not take

it into a court of law. It would not stand, it could not stand for a moment. And what would be the issue," cried Mr. Rushton almost weeping, "the money would be divided. The old man would be declared intestate, and the child, Jock as they call him, would take his share. She would deserve it—upon my honour, she would deserve it—but it would cut the property to pieces all the same, and that would be worse than anything. It will drive me out of my senses, I can't bear this anxiety much longer," Mr. Rushton said.

Sir Thomas shook his head. "I don't see how it is to be mended. She has set her heart on carrying out the will, and unless you can show that she has no right—"

"Right, there is no right in it!" Mr. Rushton cried. "She will find out she has me to deal with. I am not a fool like Chervil. I will not give in at the first word; I will make my stand. I will put down my foot."

"But, my good fellow," said Sir Thomas, sympathetically; "first word or last word, what can it matter? What can you do against her? The will gives it, and the law allows it—you are helpless—you must give in to her at the last."

"I won't!" he said, "or else I'll throw up the whole concern; it has been nothing but botheration and annoyance. And now my wife at me—and Ray. I'll wash my hands of the whole matter. I'll not have my life made a burden to me, not for old Trevor nor for Lucy, nor for any will in the world."

"Give her to me, and you will be free," said Sir

Thomas, looking at his excited opponent steadily, to conceal the laughter in his own eyes.

He came out of Mr. Rushton's office an hour after, triumphant, and came along the market-place, and down the High Street, with a smile upon his face. Sir Tom felt that the ball was at his foot. An air of success and prosperity was about him, which vaguely impressed all the passers-by, and even penetrated through the shows in the shop-windows, and made everybody aware that something fortunate had happened. What had come to him? A fortune had been left him—he had been appointed ambassador somewhere, he had been made an undersecretary of state. All these suggestions were abroad in Farafield before night—for at this time it was quite early, and the people about were at comparative leisure, and free to remark on what they saw. Something had happened to Sir Tom, and it was something good. The town in general disapproved of many of his ways, but yet liked Sir Tom. It pleased the public to see him streaming along like a procession, with all his colours flying. He went on till he came to the Terrace, pervading the streets like a new gleam of sunshine; but then he stopped short, just as he was about to enter the gateway. Lucy herself was at the window, looking for him. He paused as he was about to go in, then waved his hand to her, and turned the other way. Lucy followed him with her eyes, with astonishment, and disappointment, and consternation. Where could he be going across the Common, away from her though he saw her waiting for him? Sir Tom looked back once more, and waved his hand again when he was half way along the uneven road. He was bound for the White House. He

recollected the letter of the will, which Lucy had vowed to keep, though Lucy herself had forgotten the marriage committee, and Mr. Rushton had this very morning openly scoffed at it. But Sir Thomas was confident in the successfulness of his success. Already of the six votes he had secured three. One more, and all was safe.

Mrs. Stone was in her parlour, like the queen in the ballad, and like that royal lady, was engaged upon a light refection. She had been worried, and she had been crossed, and teaching is hungry work. The two sisters were strengthening themselves with cake and wine for their work, when Sir Thomas Randolph was suddenly shown into the Queen Anne parlour, taking them by surprise. Sir Tom was not a man to alarm any woman with the mildest claim to personal attractiveness, and he admired the handsome schoolmistress, and was not without an eye to see that even the little Southernwood, with her little old-fashioned curls upon her cheek, had a pretty little figure still, and a complexion which a girl need not have despised. How Sir Tom made it apparent that he saw these personal advantages, it would be hard so say—yet he managed to do so; and in five minutes had made himself as comfortable as the circumstances permitted in one of the lofty Chippendale chairs, and was talking of most things in heaven and earth in his easy way. The ladies saw, as the people in the streets had seen, that some good fortune had happened to Sir Tom. But he was very wary in his advances, and it was not till a little stir in the passages gave him warning that the girls were flocking in again to their class rooms, and the moment of leisure nearly over, that he ventured on

the real object of his visit. It was more difficult than he had thought; he had his back to the window, and the room was not very light, which was a protection to him; but still he had to clear his throat more than once before he began.

"I have a selfish object in this early visit," he said; "you will never divine it. I have come to throw myself on your charity. You have it in your power to make me or to mar me. I want you to give me your consent."

"To what?" Mrs. Stone said, surprised. Was it for a general holiday? was it an indulgence for Lily Barrington, for whom he professed a partiality. What was it? perhaps a *protégé* of doubtful pedigree, whom he wished to put under her care.

Sir Thomas got up, keeping his back to the window. It was not half so easy as dealing with Mr. Rushton. "It is something about your little pupil, Lucy Trevor."

"O!" Mrs. Stone got up, too. "I want to hear nothing more of Lucy Trevor. I wash my hands of her," she said.

"Ah!" said Miss Southernwood, coming a step closer. She divined immediately, though she was not half so clever as her sister, what it was.

"I am sorry she has displeased you," said Sir Tom. "I want you to let me marry her, Mrs. Stone."

"Marry her!" Mrs. Stone said, almost with a shriek; and then she drew herself up to a great deal more than her full height, as she knew very well how to do. "I have taken an interest in her, and she has disappointed me," she said; "and as to consenting or not consenting, all that is nonsense nowadays. It might have an-

swered last century, but now it is obsolete." Then she made him a stately curtsey. "I could have nothing to oppose to Sir Thomas Randolph, even if I meant to oppose at all," she said.

Miss Southernwood came up to him as the door closed on her sister.

"Was this what she meant all the time?" asked the milder woman. "It was you she was thinking of all the time? Well, I do not blame her, and I hope you may be very happy. But, Sir Thomas, tell Lucy that I rely upon her to do nothing more in the matter we were talking of. It could not be done, it would not be possible to have it done; but, surely, surely, you could make it up between you to poor Frank. There are so many appointments that would suit him, if he had good friends that would take a little trouble. I do think, Sir Thomas, that it might be made up to Frank."

Miss Southernwood, after all, was the best partizan and most staunch supporter; but it was strange that she, who had not originated, nay, who had disapproved of her sister's scheme in respect to Frank St. Clair, should be the one to insist upon a compensation to that discomfited hero.

Lucy was still standing at the window when Sir Tom came back. He made signs of great despondency when he came in sight, and alarmed her.

"She will not give me her consent, though I made sure of it," he said. "Lucy, what shall we do if we cannot get Mrs. Stone's consent?"

"Her consent!" said Lucy, with momentary surprise. Then she made her first rebellion against all she had hitherto considered most sacred. "I think we might do without it," she said.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE END.

THERE was one thing which Sir Thomas got out of his matrimonial arrangements which was more than he expected, and that was a great deal of fun. After he had received, in the way above described, the angry submission of the two whom he chiefly feared, he had entered into the spirit of the thing, and determined that he would faithfully obey the will, and obtain the assent of all that marriage committee, who were expected to make Lucy's marrying so difficult a matter. He was even visited by some humorous compunctions as he went on. The entire failure of poor old Trevor's precautions on this point awakened a kind of sympathetic regret in his mature mind. "Poor old fellow!" he said; "probably I was the last person he would have given his heiress to: most likely all these fences were made to keep me out:" he laughed; yet he felt a kind of sympathy for the old man, who, indeed, however, would have had no such objection to Sir Thomas as Sir Thomas thought. Next morning Lucy's suitor went to the Rector, who, to be sure, had it in his power to stop the whole proceedings, advanced as they were. But the Rector had heard, by some of the subtle secret modes of communication which convey secrets, of something going on, and patted Sir Thomas on the shoulder.

"My dear Sir Tom," he said, "I never for a moment attached any importance to the vote given to me. Why should I interfere with Miss Trevor's marri[illegible] father-in-law that is to be (if one can

future tense of a person who is in the past,) entertained some odd ideas. He was an excellent man, I have not a doubt on that point, but—— Now what could I know about it, for instance? I know Lucy—she's a very nice girl, my girls like what they have seen of her immensely; but I know nothing about her surroundings. I am inclined to think she is very lucky to have fallen into no worse hands than yours."

"The compliment is dubious," said Sir Tom, "but I accept it; and I may take it for granted that I have your consent?"

"Certainly, certainly, you have my consent. I never thought of it but as a joke. That old man—I beg your pardon—your father-in-law, must have had queer ideas about many things. I hear he left his heiress great latitude about spending—allowed her, in short, to give away her money."

"I wonder how you heard that?"

"Ah! upon my word I can scarcely tell you. Common talk. They say, by the way, she is going to give a fortune to Katie Russell on her marriage with young Rainy, the schoolmaster; compensation, that! Rainy (who is a young prig, full of Dissenting blood, though it suits him to be a Churchman) no doubt, thought he had a good chance for the heiress herself."

"Don't speak any worse than you can help of my future relations," said Sir Tom, with a laugh; "it might make things awkward afterwards," upon which the Rector perceived that he had gone half a step too far.

"Rainy is a very respectable fellow, there is not a word to be said against him. I wish I could say as much for all my own relations," he said; "but, Randolph, as I am a kind of a guardian, you know, take

my advice in one thing. It is all very fine to be liberal; but I would not let her throw her money away."

Sir Tom made no direct reply. He shook the Rector's hand, and laughed. "I'll tell Lucy you send her your blessing," he said.

And then he went off in a different direction, from the fine old red-brick Rectory, retired in its grove of trees, to the little, somewhat shabby street in which Mr. Williamson, the Dissenting minister, resided—if a man can be said to reside in a back street. The house was small and dingy, the door opening into a very narrow passage, hung with coats and hats, for Mr. Williamson, as was natural, had a large family. It was only after an interval of running up and downstairs, and subdued calling of one member of the household after another, that the minister was unearthed and brought from the little back-room, called his study, in his slippers and a very old coat, to receive the unlikely visitor. Sir Thomas Randolph! what could he want? There is always a certain alarm in a humble household attendant upon the unexpectedness of such a visit. Could anything have happened? Could some one have gone wrong, was the anxious question of the Williamsons, as the minister was roused, and gently pushed into the parlour where Sir Thomas, surrounded by all the grim gentility of the household gods, was awaiting him. The mother and daughters were on tiptoe in the back-room, not listening at the door certainly, but with excited ears ready for every movement. The vague alarm that they felt was reflected in the minister's face. Sir Thomas Randolph! What could he want? It was a relief to Mr. William

he heard what it was; but he was not so easy in his assent as the Rector. He took a seat near the suitor, with an air of great importance replacing the vague distrust and fear that had been in his face.

"It is a great trust, Sir Thomas," he said. "And I must be faithful. You will not expect me to do anything against my conscience. Lucy Trevor is a lamb of the flock, though spiritually no longer under my charge; her mother was an excellent woman, and our late friend, Mr. Trevor— This is an altogether unexpected application, you must allow me to think it over. I owe it to—to our late excellent friend who committed this trust to my unworthy hands."

"I thought," said Sir Tom; "that it was a matter of form merely; but," he added, with a better inspiration, "I quite see how, to a delicate sense of duty like yours, it must take an aspect—"

"That is it, Sir Thomas—that is it;" Mr. Williamson said. "I must be faithful at whatever cost. Yourself now, you will excuse me; there are reports—"

"A great many, and at one time very well-founded," said Sir Thomas, with great seriousness, looking his judge in the face.

This took the good minister by surprise, and the steady look confused him. A great personage, the greatest man in the county, a baronet, a man whose poverty (for he was known to be poor) went beyond Mr. Williamson's highest realization of riches! It gave the excellent minister's bosom an expansion of solemn pride, and, at the same time, a thrill of alarm. Persecution is out of date; but to stand up in the presence of one of the great ones of the earth, and convict him of evil—this is still occasionally possible.

Mr. Williamson rose to the grandeur of his position. Such an opportunity had never been given to him before, and might never be again.

"I am glad that you do not attempt to deny it, Sir Thomas; but at the same time there is a kind of bravado that boasts of evil-doing. I hope that is not the source of your frankness. The happiness of an innocent young girl is a precious trust, Sir Thomas. Unless we have guarantees of your change of life, and that you are taking a more serious view of your duties, how can I commit such a trust into your hands?"

"What kind of guarantees can I offer?" said Sir Thomas, with great seriousness. "I cannot give securities for my good conduct, can I? I will cordially agree to anything that your superior wisdom and experience can suggest."

"Do not speak of my wisdom, for I have none—experience, perhaps I may have a little; and I think we must have guarantees."

"With all my heart—if you will specify the kind," Sir Thomas said.

But here the good minister was very much at a loss—for he did not in the least know what kind of guarantees could be given, or taken. He was not accustomed to have his word taken so literally. He cleared his throat, and a flush came over his countenance, and he murmured "Ah!" and "Oh!" and all the other monosyllables in which English difficulty takes refuge. "You must be aware," he said, "Sir Thomas, not that I mean to be disagreeable—that there are many things in your past life calculated to alarm the guardians."

"But, my dear Sir, when I confess it," said Sir

Thomas, "when I admit it! when I ask only—tell me what guarantees I can give—what I can do, or say—"

"Guarantees are necessary—certainly guarantees are necessary," said the minister shaking his head; and then he gave to his attentive hearer a little sermon upon marriage, which was one of the good man's favourite subjects. Sir Thomas listened with great gravity and sympathy. He subdued the twinkle in his eyes—he wanted to take advantage of the honourable estate. He said very little and allowed his Mentor to discourse freely. And nothing was said further about guarantees. Mr. Williamson gave his consent with *effusion* before the interview was over. "You have seen the folly of a careless life," he said, "I cannot but hope that your heart is touched, Sir Thomas, and that all the virtues of maturity will develop in you; and if my poor approval and blessing can do you any good, you have it. I am not of those who think much of, neither do I belong to a denomination which gives special efficacy to—any man's benediction; but as Jacob blessed Joseph, I give you my blessing." Then as his visitor rose content, and offered him his hand, an impulse of hospitality came over the good man. "My wife would say I was letting you go coldly, without offering you anything; but I believe it is quite out of fashion to drink wine in the morning—which is a very good thing, an excellent thing. But if you will come to tea—any afternoon, Sir Thomas. If you will bring Lucy to tea!"

Afterwards, after the door was shut, the minister darted out again and called after his visitor. "My wife says if you would name an afternoon, I would write to her what day we may expe

to make preparations," said the minister waving his hand, "but in case we should be out, or engaged."

Sir Thomas promised fervently. "You shall certainly hear a day or two before we come," he said, and walked away with a smile on his face. To be sure he never meant to go back to tea, but his conscience did not smite him. He had got off safe and sound without any guarantees.

"Now there is only my aunt's consent to get," he said when he had gone back to the Terrace. "We have stuck to the very letter of the will, and you see all has gone well. I am going off to Fairhaven tomorrow. I know she is there."

"But must you ask her consent? you know she will give it," Lucy said.

"How do I know she will give it. Perhaps she would prefer to keep you to herself." Lucy smiled at the thought; but Sir Thomas did not feel so sure. His aunt meant him to marry Lucy *eventually;* but that was a very different thing from carrying her off now.

When Sir Thomas went away, Lucy had a great many visitors. Even Mrs. Rushton came, embarrassed, but doing her best to look at her ease. "Why did you not tell me that this was going on, you silly child? I should have understood everything, I should have made allowances for everything. But perhaps he had never come to the point till the other day? Mr. Rushton and Raymond send you their very best wishes. And Emmy has hopes that after seeing so much of each other all the autumn you will choose her for one of your bridesmaids, Lucy. And I wish you every happiness, my dear," Mrs. Rushton cried, kissing her with a little enthusiasm, having talked all her embar-

rassment away. Lucy was surprised by this change, but she was no casuist, and she did not inquire into it. It was a relief which she accepted thankfully. Mrs. Stone came also with her congratulations, "Lady Randolph was very wise to forestall everybody," she said. "And Lucy, I shall be very glad to have you near me, to watch how you go on in your new life. Never hesitate to come to me in a difficulty." This was the way in which she took her pupil's elevation. Had Lucy been raised to a throne, she would have made a similar speech to her. She would have felt that she could instruct her how to reign. As for Mr. St. Clair, Lucy still had much trouble to go through on his account. She was very reluctant to give up her scheme for his help, but at last after a great many interviews with Miss Southernwood, was got to perceive that the thing to be done was to make Sir Thomas, "find an appointment" for her unfortunate suitor. "He can easily do it," said Miss Southernwood with that innocent faith in influence, which so many good people still retain.

Bertie Russell disappeared from Farafield on the day after the advent of Sir Thomas. He was the most angry of all Lucy's suitors, and he put her this time into his book, in colours far from flattering. But fortunately nobody knew her, and the deadly assault was never found out, not even by its immediate victim, for like many writers of fiction, and indeed like most who are worth their salt, Bertie was not successful in the portraiture of real character. His fancy was too much for his malevolence, and his evil intentions thus did no harm.

Sir Thomas travelled as fast as expresses could

take him to the house in which his aunt was paying one of her many Autumn visits—for I need not say that she had returned from Homburg some time before. The house was called Fairhaven. It was the house of a distinguished explorer and discoverer; and the company assembled there included various members of Lady Randolph's special "society." When Sir Thomas walked into the room, where, all the male portion of the party being still in the covers, the ladies were seated at tea, his aunt rose to meet him from out of a little group of her friends. Her privy council, that dread secret tribunal by which her life was judged, were all about her in the twilight and firelight. When his name was announced, to the great surprise of everybody, Lady Randolph rose up with a similar but much stronger sense of vague alarm than that which had moved the minister the previous day. "Tom!" she cried, with surprise which she tried to make joyful; but indeed she was frightened, not knowing what kind of news he might have come to tell. Mrs. Berry-Montagu, who was sitting as usual with her back to the light, though there was so little of that, gave a little nod and glance aside to Lady Betsinda, who was seated high in a throne-like antique chair, and did not care how strong the light was which fell on her old shiny black satin and yellow lace. "I told you!" said Mrs. Berry-Montagu. She thought all her friend's hopes, so easily penetrated by those keen-eyed spectators, were about to be thrown to the ground—and the desire to observe "how she would bear it," immediately stirred up those ladies to the liveliest interest. Sir Thomas, however, when he had greeted his aunt, sat down with his usual friendly ease, and had some

tea. He was quite ready to answer all their questions, and he was not shy about his good news, but ready to unfold them whenever it might seem most expedient so to do.

"Straight from the Hall?" Lady Randolph said, with again a tremor. Did this mean that he had been making preparations for his setting out?

"I got there three days ago," said Sir Tom; "poor old house, it is a pity to see it so neglected. It is not such a bad house—"

"A bad house! there is nothing like it in the county. If I could but see you oftener there, Tom," his aunt cried, in spite of herself.

Sir Tom smiled, pleased with the consciousness which had not yet lost its amusing aspect; but he did not make any reply.

"He likes his own way," sad Lady Betsinda, "I don't blame him. If I were a young man—and he is still a young man—I'd take my swing. When he marries, then he'll range himself, like all the rest, I suppose."

"Lady Betsinda talks like a book—as she always does," said Sir Tom with his great laugh, "when I marry, everything shall be changed."

"That desirable consummation is not very near at hand one can see," said Mrs. Berry-Montagu, out of the shadows, in her thin, fine voice.

Sir Tom laughed again. There was something frank, and hearty, and joyous in the sound of his big laugh; it tempted other people to laugh too, even when they did not know what it was about. And Lady Ran-

dolph did not in the least know what it was about—yet the laugh gained her in spite of herself.

"*Apropos* of marriage," said Mrs. Montagu once more, "have you seen little Miss Trevor in your wilds, Sir Tom? Our young author has gone off there, on simulated duty of a domestic kind, but to try his best for the heiress, I am sure. Do you think he has a chance? I am interested," said the little lady. "Come, the latest gossip! you must know all about it. In a country neighbourhood every scrap is worth its weight in gold."

"I know all about it," said Sir Tom.

"That you may be sure he does; where does all the gossip come from but from the men? we are never so thorough. He'll give you the worst of it, you may take my word for that. But I like that little Lucy Trevor," cried old Lady Betsinda; "she was a nice, modest little thing. She never looked her money; she was more like a little girl at home, a little kitten to play with. I hope she is not going to have the author. I always warned you, Mary Randolf, not to let her have to do with authors, and that sort of people—but you never take my advice till it's too late."

"She is not going to marry the author," said Sir Tom, with another laugh: and then he rose up, almost stumbling over the tea-table. "My dear ladies," he said, "who are so much interested in Lucy Trevor, the fact is that the author never had the slightest chance. She is going to marry—me. And I have come, Aunt Mary, if you please, to ask if you will kindly give your consent? The other guardians have been good enough to approve of me," he added, making her a bow,

"and I hope I may not owe my disappointment to you."

"The other guardians——! Tom!" cried Lady Randolph, falling upon him, and seizing him with both hands, "is this true?"

Sir Tom kissed her hand with a grace which he was capable of when he pleased, and drew it within his arm.

"I presume, then," he said, as he led her away, "that I shall get your consent too."

Thus old Mr. Trevor's will was fulfilled. It was not fulfilled in the way he wished or thought of, but what then? He thought it would have kept his daughter unmarried, whereas, her mourning for him was not ended when she became Lady Randolph—which she did very soon after the above scene, to the apparent content of everybody. Even Philip Rainy looked upon the arrangement with satisfaction. Taking Lucy's fortune to redeem the great Randolf estate, and to make his little cousin the first woman in the county, was not like giving it "to another fellow:" which was the thing he had not been able to contemplate with patience. The popular imagination, indeed, was more struck with the elevation of little Lucy Trevor to be the mistress of the Hall, than with Sir Thomas's good fortune in becoming the husband of the greatest heiress in England. But when his settlements were signed, both the guardians, Mr. Chervil and Mr. Rushton, took the bridegroom elect aside.

"We cannot do anything for you about that giving-away clause," Mr. Chervil said, shaking his head.

"But Sir Thomas is not the man I take him for,

if he don't find means to keep that in check," said Mr. Rushton.

Sir Tom made no reply, and neither of these gentlemen could make out what was meant by the humorous curves about his lips, and the twinkle in his eye.

THE END.

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